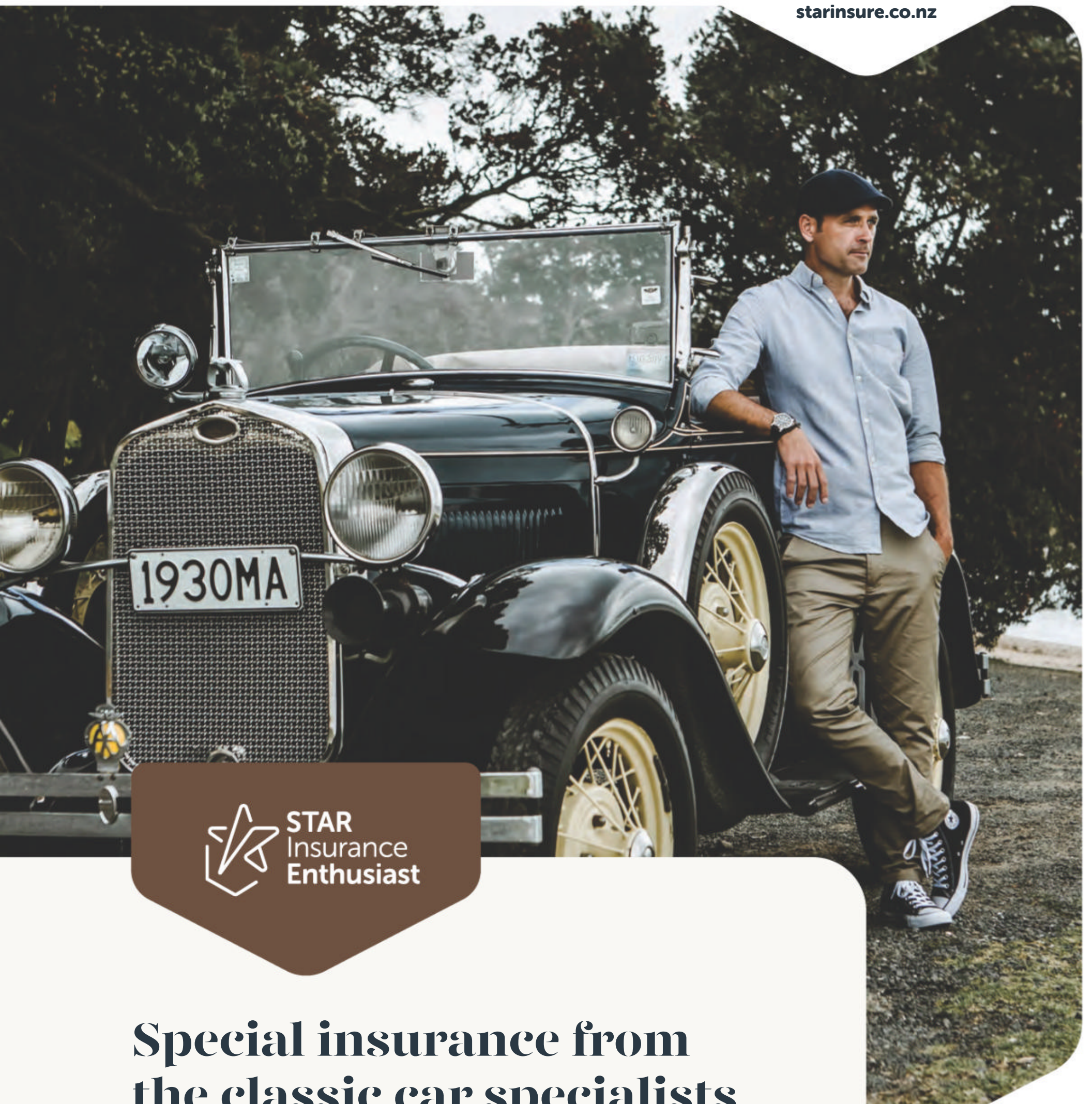




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Mr Perfect

One of the things I have learnt to enjoy during the recent lockdown periods in Auckland, apart from working on this great magazine, is watching motoring-related topics on YouTube.

From barn finds, which I always find intriguing, to eclectic collections featuring hundreds of classic cars, sometimes languishing in dark, musty, dilapidated old sheds covered in years' worth of dust just waiting for their owners to restore or drive them — one day.

Classic motor racing has become one of my favourites. Old footage of events such as the Monaco Grand Prix, Le Mans, Indianapolis 500, Goodwood Festival of Speed, and Mille Miglia have kept me entertained for hours. Back in the late '80s, I remember watching what must be one of the best motor sport films ever made. The clip featuring 1981 world rally champion Ari Vatanen setting a new lap record of the dangerously twisty Pikes Peak hill-climb event was played during a break in the Australian Grand Prix, which I taped on my old Beta recorder. The course wasn't tarmac in those times, and Vatanen ascended the 19.99km climb in his specially modified 447kW Peugeot 405 T16 GR, Peugeot's best rally car at the time. Charging around 156 turns, climbing 1440m from the start to the finish at 4302m, on grades averaging 7.2 per cent, the 'Flying Finn' presented us with some of the wildest motor sport footage of all time. I don't know how many times I've watched that footage over the years, but there's one other video clip that I return to time after time.

I have watched virtually every Bathurst event at Mount Panorama since the mid '70s, when the grid featured everything from Volvos to Camaros and Jaguars to Nissans, not just Falcons and Commodores. They were driven by some of the greats of the sport — Jim Richards, Allan Grice, Larry Perkins, Mark Skaife, Allan Moffatt, and Dick Johnson, to name a few.

The year in question was 1986, the driver none other than 'Mr Perfect'.

The late Peter Brock would drive the Holden Dealer Team (HDT) Holden VK Commodore SS Group A in the James Hardie 1000 at Mount Panorama, teamed with Allan Moffatt. Brock qualified the No. 05 HDT car second, but it was heavily damaged by Moffatt during a subsequent session. There was not enough time to repair it for the start of the 'Great Race'. Brock had also qualified the HDT's No. 3, but the race rules prevented swapping cars, so Brock was unable to compete in the Hardie's Heroes, which we now know as the Top 10 Shootout.

The clip in question is onboard with Brock as he describes one lap of the gruelling circuit. "I've had some fun and games earlier, I can tell you," he says casually, as he threads the Commodore through slow traffic on his run up the mountain. "I'm out of third, into fourth at 6500rpm, and into fifth. I've got a Nissan in front, so I'll stick to the side of the road up here. It's a bit airborne up here, hold the anchors, back to fourth, third and turn the nose in on the run down Conrod," he drawls, like he's taking a Sunday drive. Peter wrestles the car over every bump, twist, and turn, with one hand on the steering wheel and the other constantly rearranging the cogs, without the benefit of a cool suit, sequential transmission, anti-roll bar, brake bias adjusters, or a steering wheel that lights up like a stock-market trading board, such as we're used to seeing in modern race cars.

Brock and Moffatt finished fifth that day behind the Ford Falcon driven by the great Dick Johnson and Gregg Hansford.

With 30 years of motor racing under his belt, Brock was widely regarded as one of the most gifted drivers of his generation, and he remains an icon in Australian sports. With a record-breaking 29 races in succession, seven pole positions, nine wins, 12 podium finishes and 22 completed races at Bathurst, Peter truly is King of the Mountain.

Ashley Webb

Editor

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ONE MAN'S PASSION STARTED IT ALL





By Ian Parkes, photography by High Art Photography

RENAULT LIFELINE



ALTERNATIVE STYLE



While other makers rely on a consistent look and feel to create a brand identity these very different cars show that at Renault, creativity and flair *are* its core identity

The Renault Alpine GTA is a car that seems to attract admiration without much enthusiasm. Its slightly hunched rear and slightly overlong and fairly bland nose don't say 'sports car' like the pouty Porsche 911s of the same vintage do, nor do they say 'grand tourer' like Bentleys do. Of course, they cost much less but even so their appeal is a lot more subtle. The previous model, the A310, was criticized for being underwhelming and this car was probably also unfairly weighted with low expectations. Perhaps the car's biggest burden was the Renault name. As a maker of practical if quirky French saloons, Renault didn't have the same *éclat* as Porsche, Lotus, and Jensen, let

alone Ferrari or other exotica.

A previous Alpine, the A110, built by that specialist maker using Renault mechanicals, set the world alight by winning the Monte Carlo rally in 1971 and the inaugural World Rally Championship (WRC). It took the creation of the Lancia Stratos, the world's first purpose-built rally car, to end the Alpine's reign. Renault thought that acquiring the little Alpine concern — or 'Alpeen', as they say — was its shortcut to a more lucrative market segment. However, instead of elevating the Renault name, it's sadly more the case that the Alpine name was borne down to Renault's level. Its problems were compounded in the sports car market next door in the

UK, where the Alpine name belonged to Sunbeam, then Chrysler Talbot. That meant the French car had to be marketed in the UK as the Renault GTA, entirely missing out on Alpine's reputation and engineering legacy.

RENAULT GT? WHOOOP DE DO

In fact, Renault was so discouraged by the experience that it mothballed the Alpine brand until some of its irrepressible engineers brought it back in an award-winning tribute, also called the A110, in 2017. Once again the Alpine, featured in Issue No. 351 of this magazine, took on and bettered the usual competition from Porsche. I'm personally pleased to report that, after experiencing the French car, at least one Kiwi owner gave up his Porsche Cayman to get one — not me, I hasten to add, in case anyone gets the wrong idea about journalism pay rates. Hopefully, the new Alpines are selling in satisfactory numbers overseas because, for boring money reasons, Renault New Zealand is not selling the new A110 here.



So back to the GTA. These appear to have been seen as worthy and maybe even deserving of greater success but the reality of relatively slow sales means that those who could or would proselytize on the car's virtues — those who had owned or even driven one — were few in number.

Kimball Gaitely is one such person. He bought this Renault GTA in 1992 and he loved it so much that he bought a second one, which was actually the launch car and demonstrator model in New Zealand. Kimball tidied it up before conceding that he really didn't need two of them and sold it to the car magazine writer who road-tested it at launch.

For some, part of the pleasure in classic cars is seeing them appreciate in value. Kimball is content simply to have the GTA as a car that he appreciates. His taste in such matters stands up to scrutiny. He has a collection of cars that demonstrates his passion and a rather single-minded focus on brilliant sports cars. His garage includes a Lotus Esprit Turbo — the V8 model — a Porsche 911 turbo, a Lancia Delta Integrale Evo 1,

Kimball tidied the second GTA up before conceding that he really didn't need two of them and sold it to the car magazine writer who road-tested it at launch

an Alfa Romeo 4C, a Lamborghini Murciélago, and a nearly mint, low-mileage 1990 Toyota Supra, which he decided to buy mostly to keep it out of fevered tuners' hands.

Kimball had a long career in cabin crew for the national carrier. He turned stopovers in the UK into the occasional shopping trip among the treasure trove of vehicles on offer there.

THREE RENAULTS TO THE FORE

Kimball says that he has owned around 200 cars, up to and including Ferraris and similar exotica, so we should take note that he has no fewer than four Renaults in his collection.

The three we line up to feature in this issue show amazing breadth and flair, just in that vast conglomerate's

sports car output. Perhaps that in itself suggests a reason Kiwis have found it hard to get a handle on the brand's identity, beyond its Frenchness.

While Renaults, among many other marques, have come and gone in Kimball's collection, the GTA has been a fixture.

"It's just such a clever design," he says. Its polyester and fibreglass body makes it lighter at 1220kg than its Porsche 944 rival. While not notably wind-cheating in appearance — its square front looks bluffer in photos than it does in real life, it was also aerodynamic for its time, with a touted drag coefficient of 0.28. Its integrated bumpers helped. Its predecessor A310 had conventional bumpers, although Renault had pioneered the integrated concept in 1971 on its Renault 5.

Like both of its ancestors the car has a central backbone chassis



Some of Kimball's earlier Renaults



The GTA at home

but with outriggers for side impact protection. Instead of being a single-piece moulding like the A110 and the A310, the body is made up of smaller panels, which made it much faster to assemble, down from 130 hours to 77 — although it was still a hand-built process.

Its naturally aspirated 2849cc rear-mounted PRV V6 engine from the Renault 25 with five-speed gearbox from the Renault 30 is mounted on a separate subframe, which means that it can be dropped out in less than two hours.

The engine is on display through the rear window of Kimball's GTA. He prefers to leave off the moulded engine cover, which has channels built into its underside that feed air to the right places on the turbo models. Kimball's 1987 GTA is one of just 212 right-hand-drive versions of the 1504 carburetted cars produced. Renault built 4664 GTA turbos. Interestingly, 19 of the GTAs sold new here, of which this is one, were non-turbo cars. Just three were the turbo model, which was introduced a year after the car's launch in 1984. The factory was set up to produce 10 cars a day but over its six-year production life averaged just three a day.

Kimball has replaced the unusual carburettor set-up, which featured two different sized carbs, with a twin-choke Weber to improve its bottom-end power. It also does without an air cleaner, but the engine's satisfying roar is kept at civilized levels in the cabin, separated by an internal glass screen.

A CERTAIN JE NE SAIS QUOI

The interior of the car misses the opportunity to announce it is

Its naturally aspirated 2849cc rear-mounted PRV V6 engine is mounted on a separate subframe, which means that it can be dropped out in less than two hours

something special and the frankly bonkers dance the outward-facing windscreen wipers do is also sure to raise a laugh.'

The dashboard is square and unsporty and, as material science has come on massively over the decades, the interior looks too plasticky — although, to be fair, the plastics in Porsches of the era are hardly any better. The massive control console for the sound system, which incorporates a graphic equalizer, would have been very space age at the time. The whole thing looks as if it will warp in the heat although very little distortion has taken place. The squared-off door cards and trim, on the other hand, look modern and well designed. They make the swoops on almost all modern car door trims look samey.

As this car was marketed as a GT rather than a sports car, the front seats were plain and unsupportive. Kimball has replaced them with Recaro seats, but this isn't obvious at first glance. They look the part until you notice the different fabric on the rear seats.

He's also added a sportier steering wheel, as the light steering can handle a narrower diameter wheel.

Kimball says that the car is still a classy conveyance on longer trips. It's the closest thing he owns to a normal car. Driving the car around the streets of Auckland doesn't give it a chance to show off its best features, but as you'd expect in a French car the suspension is plush, which makes this fairly high performance car comfortable around town. A prod on the pedal provokes the right response, without the hesitation you might get from a turbo motor of this vintage. It's a very torquey unit, especially with the Weber conversion. That came in very handy when a bit of the linkage fell off and Kimball couldn't get out of fifth gear. Kimball said it was not an issue on the motorway but as he stopped on the motorway off-ramp, which actually goes uphill, he had it all to do.

"It pulled away in fifth, no problem," he says.

VIRTUES UP FRONT

Renault's efforts to create a sophisticated GT are more evident in the way that it drives than in any other sphere. It's very easy for someone used to modern cars to step in and drive it. Otherwise, the clutch is light and the engine responds smoothly to the accelerator. As the gearbox is attached to the forward end of the rear-mounted engine, the gear change, operated by short levers, doesn't feel especially sporty but it works well

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enough and it's better than the one in Kimball's Lotus Esprit, which has the gearbox at the back.

Around town then the car hides most of its virtues, except that a hint of its lightness and its rear engine does come through. As with Porsche's 911, it makes a virtue of the rear-engine layout. The engine was moved a smidgen further forward than in the A310 to improve its overall balance but the front end is still very responsive, and very easily placed, which again makes it an easy drive.

Around town the car hides most of its virtues, except that a hint of its lightness and its rear engine does come through. As with Porsche's 911, it makes a virtue of the rear-engine layout

Kimball bought this car when it came up for sale 28 years ago. His other GTA was black but this one was red like 44 per cent of its brethren. A few years ago Andy Booth, the New Zealand V8 championship driver who has a New Zealand Grand Prix (NZGP) and the Denny Hulme Memorial Trophy to his credit, told Kimball that it looked very like the car his parents had owned. When he checked the number plate, he realized that it was the selfsame car in which his parents had taken him to school.





RENAULT ALPINE GTA

Model: D500

Engine: PRV 90-degree V6

Capacity: 2849cc

Valves: Single overhead camshaft, four valves per cylinder

Comp. ratio: 9.5:1

Max power: 118kW at 5750rpm

Max torque: 221Nm at 3500rpm

Fuel system: SC34 plus DC35 (on standard car)

Transmission: Five-speed manual

0-100kph: 8 seconds

Top speed: 235kph





RENAULT CLIO V6 PHASE 1

Engine: 60-degree ESL V6 24-valve L7X

Capacity: 2946cc

Max power: 172kW

Max torque: 300Nm at 3750rpm

Transmission: PK6 six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

Length: 3830mm

Width: 1940mm

Height: 1420mm

Kerb weight: 1355kg

0–100kph: 6.4 seconds

Top speed: 235kph





SOPHISTICATED INSANITY

The Renault Clio featured here also has a V6 but this engine is the three-litre 24-valve unit from the Renault Laguna, uprated to 169kW. When applied to a little hot hatch you'd have to think it turns this roller skate into a monster.

Kimball suggests that I wind down the passenger's window when driving it. The engine is quite loud when you are in the car, because it is in the cabin with you. As the not-at-all-subtle air scoops on the side indicate, this is a mid-engine rear-wheel-drive car. The engine is bolted in under a cover where the rear seat ought to be. But wind down the window and prod the accelerator and you get the full benefit of the induction roar and exhaust bass notes bouncing off the scenery. The engine is smooth but the uneven firing of the V6 adds enough syncopation to make it utterly stirring.

"The noise it makes alone is enough to make you buy the car," says Kimball.

This car shows the wild enthusiasm of French carmakers in a different way to the other two cars featured here. Take a basic, effective shopping hatch, throw away most of the things that make it practical, and stuff it full of power and go-faster bits. Add a massive bodykit. No, forget that. Reshape all the wings to cover those fat tyres. It's

The engine is bolted where the rear seat ought to be. But wind down the window and prod the accelerator and you get the full benefit of the induction roar and exhaust bass notes bouncing off the scenery

boy-racer stuff approved at board level. It is based on the Mark 2 version of the Clio, but after its transformation it shares very few parts with that car.

There's just one thing that makes this seem logical. Renault did something very similar to create the Renault 5 Group B rally car. However there is a big difference between this car and a boy-racer special. It is massively sophisticated. While the body bulges change the proportions and stance of the car dramatically, announcing its power, it is, in its way, subtle and complete. The front wing is sharply raked back into the standard doors and the rear wings, incorporating the scoops, are a masterpiece of curves and creases. Rather than just having added bulges, the car has gorgeous new rear

wings with a bold curve following the wheel down to the sill.

Kimball prefers the Phase 1 to its successor, the Phase 2. That this car was produced by Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR) rather than in-house like the Phase 2 is one reason, but also it still has the rounder, more distinctive, and innocent-looking headlights.

DELIGHT DELAYED

Kimball fell in love with the car when it was launched and enquired about it immediately but at \$100K it was much more expensive here, over the base car's price, than in the UK so he held off. However, the owner of a specialist Renault garage offered him this one a few years ago. It was sold new in Singapore but came here after only about a year. Kimball leapt at the chance.

"Every time he sees it, he says he shouldn't have sold me that car," Kimball tells us.

TWR had to substantially re-engineer the car to swap the engine location and get it to handle the power, so it weighs quite a bit more than the standard car. At 1355kg, a third heavier than the one-tonne standard car, it is no longer a light little shopping basket. But it works.

The weight means that it is not

likely to throw you off the road when you give an incautious dab to the throttle. In fact it is not much faster than the sportiest front-wheel-drive Clio, ticking off 0–100kph in around 6.3 seconds compared with 6.8 for the Clio Cup but its top speed is substantially faster at 235kph. This engine also delivers its power at the top end of the rev range. When you want to get serious, it does too.

Walkinshaw also sorted the suspension of course, and added bigger wheels and brakes. While the ride is firmish, holding promise, the car is still French so still very comfortable around town. Despite the apparent madness the car is actually very civilized to drive. That's French sophistication for you. The gearbox also, in typical French fashion, is not especially sweet. It's a bit clicky but it works better and unobtrusively when warm, and the clutch is probably as light as that of the standard car.

GREAT SENSATIONS

The steering is also light, because there's virtually nothing in front of you apart from the battery and servicing points for water and oils below a plastic liner under the bonnet. As with the Alpine, the mid-engine layout allows you to place the front of the car swiftly and accurately, making it very easy to drive. Kimball says that a bit of understeer was built in, perhaps as a warning, as on the limit it flicks quickly into oversteer.

"At that point it's a tricky car to handle," he explains.

There is nothing to distract from the enjoyment of pressing the loud pedal at every opportunity, and at higher speeds the poise — and the presence — of the mid-engine layout makes this car feel very special indeed.

The interior is frankly disappointing — apart from just a couple of welcome features. The Recaro seats look the business but the dashboard is basic '90s economy car in uninspiring shades of grey. I'm rarely in favour of aftermarket steering wheels — so '70s — but this car deserves something to make it look from the driver's seat as special as it feels. It does have a very nice little plaque from TWR between the seats indicating its limited-numbers

provenance but that's out of view. So, once again, while others looking at the car from outside see something special, for the driver it is the sensations the car delivers that convey its rare appeal — and it's churlish to argue with that.

Despite the apparent madness the car is actually very civilized to drive. That's French sophistication for you

A RARE TREAT

Rare this car certainly is: just 1513 Phase 1s were built by TWR in Uddevalla, Sweden. The 1309 Phase 2s, although developed by TWR, were built by Renault in Dieppe, as were the other two cars here. At its launch the Phase 2 was the most powerful production hot hatch in the world, with 188kW, outranking even the ferocious Alfa Romeo 147 GTA (184kW). Claiming those bragging rights is something that Renault works at quite assiduously to this day. There was also a Trophy version of the Clio V6, built for racing, complete with a sequential gearbox and a roll cage. That car, designed to promote the Clio range in a one-model race series, replaced the Renaultsport Spider Trophy, another one-model race series designed to wave the flag for Renault.

That brings us neatly to the third car in our line-up. If the other two cars are conventional in some respects, the Renault Spyder shows Renault's creative flair in full flight. It possibly aimed to bridge the gap between Renault's road-going cars and its Formula 1 bleeding-edge expertise. It says so much about this car — from a mainstream manufacturer — that the first models were designed and sold without a windscreen, although they had a funky-looking aerofoil deflector.

I remember, when this car was launched in 1995, applauding the simplicity and purity of its lines and its uncompromising appeal to enthusiasts. The lines are still strong and if they have aged — a bit, I guess — their simplicity,

purity, and promise are still fully intact. There is no doubt that Kimball is an enthusiast so it is no surprise that he took the chance to acquire it. It was offered to him by the same specialist who sold him the Clio, at an attractive price because he knew it was going to the right person. This 1997 Spyder came to New Zealand from Germany.

FOAM SANDWICH

What is more notable about the car today is its innovative construction. Its chassis is made up of flat carbon honeycomb composite panels glued to an aluminium space frame, territory shared only with Lotus. It was probably the arrival of the Elise, lighter, quicker, and cheaper, that spoiled the Renault party, and contributed to its rarity today. Just 1700 were built in total and officially fewer than 100 were made in right-hand-drive form for the Elise's home market.

The performance from its 112kW, two-litre, 16-valve, four-cylinder engine from the Clio Williams is unremarkable today, giving a 0–100kph time of around 6.5 seconds but this 930kg car is all about handling. Kimball has taken it to track days and says, while he can't live with the likes of (much newer) Lotus Exiges, it goes round the corners as fast as anything on the track.

If you are not going to have a windscreen forget about power steering or assisted brakes, but in line with its race car intent the pedals are adjustable. The seat doesn't recline or move back but the seat squab can be raised or lowered. There's no heater and air conditioning is of the original kind only. The car doesn't even have exterior door handles, so if you are not going to scramble over the side — say you want to open the upwards-hinging doors for dramatic effect — you have to reach inside for the internal handle. A radio was an optional extra and there are no airbags. You get an instrument binnacle with the analogue rev counter front and centre. The digital speedo, fuel gauge, and clock display are mounted in the centre of the dash, meaning that the passenger can keep an eye on them. There's a centre console covering a structural beam but elsewhere, in the footwell and the sills, the bare aluminium is on display.



RENAULT SPYDER

Engine: Four-cylinder in-line Renault Williams

Capacity: 1998cc

Max power: 112kW at 6000rpm

Transmission: Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

Brakes, F/R: Disc/Disc

Length: 3810mm

Width: 1830mm

Kerb weight: 790kg

0-100kph: 6.4 seconds

Top speed: 210kph





The Recaro seats are covered in a waterproof fabric, as most cars were shipped with nothing more than a tonneau cover.

Kimball's car is rare indeed in that not only does it have a windscreen — Renault conceded on that point, making it an option after the first year — but it also has a rather nifty hood. He hasn't seen another car with one. It's not pretty but it is pretty functional and it suits this military-spec car.

DEDICATED TO DRIVERS

The Trophy-spec race cars got a more powerful engine (157kW), a six-speed gearbox, and a full roll cage. The mid-mounted engine is tucked in tight behind the cockpit. Flipping the clamshell front bonnet reveals a small storage bin, washer bottle, tool kits, and nothing much else, although it does give you a view of the raw edge of the carbon. Both front and rear adjustable shock-absorber units are mounted inboard, again to improve handling.

The car, like the others, is also very responsive, especially in the steering but, as you'd expect, the feeling is even more naked and real in this car. You have to twist the gear knob to engage reverse but everything else, even the gearbox and cable-operated clutch, feels very direct. The sensations of driving in this car are heightened, like few other cars. It's probably the closest thing to a go-kart you can get for the road. We

The sensations of driving in this car are heightened, like few other cars. It's probably the closest thing to a go-kart you can get for the road

don't get the chance to try it, but if you are not on a racetrack, a tight mountain road must be enormous fun in this car.

So, Kimball, what is it about Renaults? Many years ago Kimball had a Porsche 911E and he had just acquired his third speeding ticket on the roads around Lake Benmore. He realized that if he carried on in that vein he would lose his licence, so he sold the car, virtually on the spot, to a friend who still owns it today. Then he bought a Renault 12TL — just about the unsportiest car you can imagine at the time. After that came two Renault 18 Turbos, a Fuego, an 11 Turbo, a 5 Turbo, and a 5 GTX.

"Then I bought the Alpine GTA and that was it," he says. "I've never had a problem with the engines in any of my Renaults. They were always reliable. You know if you have problems with a car you can go off them very quickly."

One of Kimball's early cars was a three-litre CSA BMW. He also had a 3.0 CSi manual. They are worth moonbeams now, but he had problems with both of them.

There is a trick you can do with the Renault 11 Turbo to increase the boost. He did that but the car is still going strong. Kimball has checked up on all of his previous Renaults and they are all still registered or on hold.

"They were also always very comfortable," he says.

The Renault 11 didn't have a reclining backrest but the whole seat was mounted on curved rails so you could roll it back like a rocking chair — simple, effective, and comfortable.

All of Kimball's cars, even his daily-driver (see page 104) are serious sports cars, but if several of them are Renaults, well, with most of them at least, comfort comes along with the ride. ■





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PROJECT ADDER

AN MGB
WITH BITE



Adding Rover's alloy V8 offered a well-proven route to rejuvenating fading sports car glory. But while adding fangs to an updated MGB guarantees fun, their owners should also handle with care

By Ashley Webb, photography by Rixsta Photography



The list of cars they've owned includes a 1972 Midget, a three-door 2004 MG ZR; a 2005 MG ZR (five-door); and Rae's 2005 MG TF. Bill also raced a 1967 Morris Mini Cooper S



Manfeild for many years. That car featured in an article in Issue No. 265, January 2013, of this magazine.

In April 2013, Bill sold the Cooper S and decided to buy a low mileage, freshly imported MG RV8 from Japan. He liked the idea, as there were only 1983 built in the early 1990s, which, hopefully, would translate into these cars holding their value. More importantly, their bodies were galvanized, which meant fewer rust problems, although Bill and Rae wouldn't escape encounters with oxidation.

Bill and Rae Denize have been active MG Car Club members in Wellington for nearly 32 years. They have held a variety of positions on the club committee, and now that they are both retired they can be even more involved in the club's activities. Bill is currently the president of the MG Car Club, Wellington Centre.

The list of cars they've owned over the years is testament to their passion for the brand. It includes a 1972 Midget — the round rear-wheel-arch model with 1275cc motor; a three-door 2004 MG ZR; a 2005 MG ZR (five-door); and Rae's 2005 MG TF, which they still own. Bill also raced a 1967 Morris Mini Cooper S at



A BETTER B

The MGB roadster was the basis for the MGC as well as the MGB GT coupes, the latter being available in Buick V8 flavour from 1973 onward. By 1980, the MGB had ceased production, unable to keep up with more sophisticated competition from Japan.

The escalating success of the Mazda MX-5 a decade later prompted Rover to think there was still a market for affordable roadsters. It also knew that, at one time, one of its brands built such things and the brand still had a following. The company wanted to get a roadster to market in a hurry and

Despite the RV8 being based on a 30-year-old model its classic status was assured from the day it was unveiled

reworking its classic model gave it an easy solution.

In October 1992, before an excited British public, Rover relaunched the MG roadster in the guise of the MG RV8. And despite the RV8 being based on a 30-year-old model — or maybe

because of this — its classic status was assured from the day it was unveiled.

Known as 'Project Adder', Rover took advantage of as much of the existing MGB architecture as possible. With a team of retired MG veterans, engineers, and assembly-line workers, Rover revived and redesigned the existing MGB with a budget of only £5M for the entire project. The team gathered up old MGB bodyshells, which were used as the basis for clay modeling bucks. The ever-dependable 3950cc Rover V8 engine was squeezed into the engine bay and mated to a Rover R380 five-speed manual gearbox, though a few early cars used the Rover LT55 five-speed manual unit.



PARTY TIME

Some consider the RV8 to be a B in a party frock, but the transformation delivered a more muscular look, complementing the V8. It's true, the MG RV8 is a mix of old and new technology, but only five per cent of the parts ended up being interchangeable with old MGBs.

To improve handling, there was a wider track covered by flared wheel arches, upgraded suspension, disc brakes up front, and drums in the back, sitting on 15-inch cast alloy wheels.

While it may have looked olde worlde, the interior was attuned to the idea of the quintessential British sports car, featuring a wooden dashboard and leather seats, going upmarket from the B's more basic fittings.

Buyers in Japan proved even more enthusiastic about British heritage than the British, and approximately 75 per cent were shipped to buyers there

TURNING JAPANESE

Bill's Woodcote Green MG RV8 was built in 1995 and registered brand new in Japan in 1996. Buyers in Japan proved even more enthusiastic about British heritage than the British, and approximately 75 per cent were shipped to buyers there. Most of the rest stayed in the UK, while a handful found buyers in Europe and a number of other right-hand-drive countries. By the time Bill's RV8 (build number 1994) landed in New Zealand in early 2013, it had travelled less than 14,000km from new.

Owning the car hasn't all been plain sailing. "I must confess, however, I have persevered to the point that I am now happy with my purchase," says Bill. On the 420km delivery trip back to Wellington, several issues developed. Bill's first stop was Rotorua to fill the car with petrol. He noticed that



1995 MG RV8

Production:	1993–1995
Motor:	Rover V8
Capacity:	3946cc
Max power:	187bhp (139kW) at 4750rpm
Max torque:	313Nm at 3200rpm
Fuel system:	Lucas multipoint injection
Transmission:	Rover R380 five-speed manual gearbox
Brakes, F/R:	Disc/Drum
Suspension, F/R:	Independent double-wishbone with coil springs, telescopic shocks and anti-roll bar / Live axle with twin-taper leaf springs, telescopic shocks and anti-roll bar
DIMENSIONS	
Length:	4010mm
Width:	1694mm
Wheelbase:	2330mm
Height:	1320mm
Weight:	1280kg
PERFORMANCE	
0–100kph:	6.9 seconds
Max speed:	220kph (approx.)





the inlet pipe to the petrol tank was rusty and thought at the time that he needed to have it galvanized as soon as possible. As he headed further south, Bill felt a definite lack of power just out of Turangi. He struggled on over the Desert Road and stopped at Waiouru. After lifting the bonnet for a closer look, he couldn't see anything amiss so, after having some lunch, he continued southwards but with no power to pass anything. By the time he got to Paraparaumu, the car was literally crawling along the side of the road. The only thing left to do was to call the AA. Unfortunately, like Bill, the AA service person couldn't identify the problem. He arranged for a tow truck to pick up the car and deliver Bill and Rae home to Papakowhai.

FUN WITH FUEL

A quick call to the importer and Bill had two new in-line fuel filters plus a new petrol pump at no cost. After further investigation, Bill discovered that both in-line filters were full of rust particles due to lack of use in Japan. They surmised that condensation had resulted in rust forming on the inside walls of the tank.

The tank was removed with the intention of treating the inside to prevent any further rust. However, because of the fuel-injection pipes inside the tank, the tank could not be dipped. Bill was strongly advised to try to obtain a replacement tank. The whole episode is a reminder to us all to fill the tank before leaving a car stored for long periods.

After researching the internet for a better solution, Bill discovered that British Heritage UK was producing brand-new galvanized RV8 tanks, and he wasted no time ordering one. "From the time of order to the date of receipt here in New Zealand was just six days. The fact that British Heritage is now producing these new galvanized tanks tends to suggest that some of the cars coming out of Japan have the same issue that we experienced," says Bill.

WHIRR GRRR

That issue, though, wasn't the end of the road for problems. While his new pride and joy was drivable, the fuel pump could be heard whirring away constantly

above the sound of the V8 motor. The car had been fitted with a new fuel pump, which had been supplied by the importer, but this had not resolved the issue. Once again, Bill took to the internet for a solution. He discovered that Dominic Scott, a Wellington MG club member based in Palmerston North, had experienced a similar issue. Dominic decided that the aftermarket fuel pump couldn't provide enough fuel to the motor and purchased the correct Bosch fuel pump from a supplier in Palmerston North, which he couriered to Bill. The new pump was installed and, hey presto! It was now as quiet as a church mouse, finally putting an end to months of experimenting and trying to resolve the fuel-pump noise problem.

The next issue Bill discovered was clutch fluid dripping down on his shoes when out driving. This resulted in having both the clutch and brake master cylinders overhauled. Not a big issue and symptomatic of the car having spent most of its time sitting in a garage in Japan.

The front subframe member was powder-coated at the factory, but this is known to lift off and rust from underneath. Bill's next task was to put the car up on axle stands and carefully remove as much of the powder coating as possible before applying POR 15. "Not a perfect job, but a lot quicker than removing the subframe, which

While his new pride and joy was drivable, the fuel pump could be heard whirring away constantly above the sound of the V8 motor

would have required removing the motor first," he says. The car also suffered from an annoying 'cat rattle', which required the removal of the catalytic converters, and then replacing them with straight exhaust pipes. "There may be a marginal increase in noise level, but it is not significant ... These V8 motors have a lovely sound," says Bill.



THE FINAL STRAIT

Bill has since fitted a set of krypton-filled adjustable shock absorbers for the car, which he brought back from the UK as carry-on luggage, in an effort to soften up the very firm ride. He has also experimented with tyre pressures. When he took delivery of the car, it was bouncing all over the road. He discovered that the pressures were set at around 44psi. The car is much more pleasant to drive with around 26–28psi for all four tyres, although it does make it a little heavier in the steering at low

speeds when parking. “However, I can live with this and prefer the better road ride the lower pressures give you,” he says.

Bill admits to having very little mechanical expertise, so he’s happy that long time MG Car Club member Barry Carrington, who owns Lake Autos, Petone, looks after the car. Bill and Rae also wanted to acknowledge and thank Dominic Scott for his guidance and help. “Without it I may well have given up and sold the car purely out of frustration,” says Bill. As Bill and

Rae can attest, owning a classic car can be both frustrating at times and rewarding but, to be fair, while we have catalogued a few issues here, most are attributable to this car’s particular history rather than its design.

Bill and Rae have also enjoyed spending time bringing the MG up to a reasonable concours standard, and they have thoroughly enjoyed adding another 15,000km to the odometer. They were rewarded for their efforts when the RV8 was runner up in the 2016 MG Nationals’ concours event in Taupo. ■



Bill admits to having little mechanical expertise, so MG Car Club member Barry Carrington, who owns Lake Autos, Petone, looks after the car





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A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH



Rugged Ford and Holden utes formed the backbone of farm and business transport here and in Australia for some 70 years. The Japanese pickup now commands a far greater share of the market than the utes ever did, but that just means GM Holden and Ford Falcon utes and panel vans are even more highly prized

By Quinton Taylor, photography Quinton Taylor and Lew Eustace



The demise of car production in Australia, first of BMC and Chrysler and in recent times of the big two, has only increased the popularity of their vehicles.

Ann and Lew Eustace have a passion for classic cars, particularly ones from the US, and their Invercargill garage contains some amazing examples in pristine condition thanks to Lew's skills and high standards working with metal. Lew has lost count of the number of cars and trucks he has restored over the years. For a number of years, he also helped restore some of the exhibits at what is now Bill Richardson Transport World in Invercargill. He explains how his interest in restoring cars started, with an incident

It turns out it was the last model off the line with a V8

in his youth motivating the quality he achieves in each restoration: "I learnt early on after smashing my old man's car up!"

These days, Lew's impressively finished projects are strictly for friends and family. When I call in to see him, he is in the process of completing the bare-metal repair of an early 1950s Austin convertible on his rotisserie.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

In 2018, Lew was contacted by a nearby shearing contractor, the late Errol Buchanan, for his advice on what to do with a Ford Falcon utility that had been languishing in Errol's barn for some 20 years.

"He asked me to see if it was worth restoring."

I said it was. Then, he sort of changed his mind about restoring it and said I might as well wreck it and see what I could get for it," Lew says.

Lew wasn't about to wreck it, though.

"It turns out it was the last of the model off the line in 1980 with a V8, and Errol was its first owner."



Full engine bay with 351 V8 engine, showing attention to detail with all the correct transfers



It turned out to be special in other ways too. Despite having other Fords in their collection over the years, the Eustaces had never owned an Australian model. Intrigued by the ute, Lew began finding out more about it and it wasn't long before he discovered that there was a bit more to its history. It would be an interesting project to complete.

"I thought I'd carry on with it and then I started finding out that it was a bit different. The 351-cubic-inch [5.8-litre] Cleveland V8 alerted me. Initially, I didn't realize the significance of the 'K' on the end of the VIN number and body plate showing that the 351 Cleveland V8 was factory fitted."



Pre-restoration photos by Lew Eustace



Immaculate S Pack interior

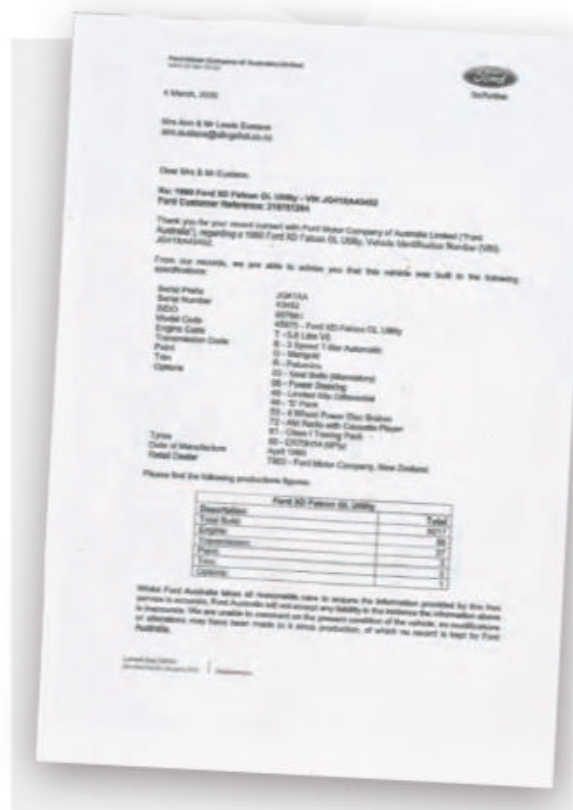
Lew's curiosity was heightened during the restoration after a comment made by a local rust-proofing contractor.

"When I sent the suspension and diff to get sandblasted with Chris Kergozou, he asked me if I was doing up a Falcon GT. I told him no, so I went a bit further with trying to find out exactly what I had got. It had all GT suspension, four-wheel discs, and an S Pack trim package. It looked like it was one of the last off the production line so they [Ford] just threw everything at it and it turned out to be quite a nice car," Lew says.

Enquiries with Ford Australia revealed that Lew's ute was unique in that not only was it the genuine article but that it was also one of only 56 utes

Lew's ute was ...
one of only 56 utes
factory fitted with
the 351-cubic-inch
V8 engine

factory fitted with the 351-cubic-inch V8 engine. Just 37 had automatic transmissions. However, Lew's example is the sole example with all optional fittings. It is indeed a one-off. The 302-cu (5.0-litre) V8 option was reasonably well known, but the 351-cu engine is very rare and it came with a limited-slip differential.





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Despite being 40 years old, the ute still has its original interior, a factory radio-cassette unit, and S Pack cloth upholstery in excellent condition



EVERY LAST NUT AND BOLT

Two years ago, Lew finished a thorough restoration and the impressive ute has taken on a new life and colour. Lew plays down the amount of effort required but despite his protestations I suspect he put a lot of time into the project. A few unwanted tenants were evicted along the way.

“It didn’t take me long. There had

been mice living in the firewall, which had caused a bit of damage,” he says. “It apparently broke down and was pushed into a shed. It was 20 years to the day when I pulled it out and it sat in my other shed for three years before I started on it. That’s why it’s in such good order — it’s been kept in a shed for so long and still is.”

Despite being 40 years old, the ute still has its original interior, untouched by the squatters, a factory radio-cassette unit, and S Pack cloth upholstery, which was in excellent condition and only needed a thorough cleaning.

“There was some minor rust in the front guards,” says Lew, “and Errol had a set of new mudguards sitting in his shed to go on it. It was originally Ford yellow [marigold], but I didn’t think it suited it and I changed it to very close to the correct Ford orange.”

The utility still has all the correct assembly decals and fittings. It is especially impressive under the bonnet

EUROSTYLE AUSSIE

Ford Australia dropped the Coke-bottle styling and went all Eurostyle for its XD Ford Falcon ‘Project Blackwood’ models released in March 1979. Its unfussy square lines echoed the Ford Granada and Cortina Mk4’s styling.

The big two-door coupé version of the preceding XC model was dropped and the new five-model range consisted of Falcon GL sedan and station wagon, Fairmont sedan and station wagon, and a top-of-the-range Ghia sedan. Commercial versions were launched in September 1979 and consisted of a base model Falcon utility and GL version plus Falcon base-model van and GL versions. The fresh new styling, with its distinctive door sills lower than the back and front windscreen and square lines, was a departure from the rounded look of the XC model. It was well received and made steady sales in both Australia and New Zealand.



In 1976, Ford collaborated with Honda in the initial design and production of an aluminium cylinder head for its sixes. It was to replace the old cast-iron unit to lose weight and gain more efficiency. Introduced midway through the XD’s production, the head was supplied by Honda for a short time before Ford Australia started using adapted tooling at its Geelong, Victoria, engine plant.

Here in New Zealand the model was the first Ford for some time to be used by local police and the Ministry of Transport (MOT) as a frontline patrol car. The old sixes revved so freely that MOT headquarters issued a directive instructing officers not to

hold lower gears on their patrol cars’ automatic transmissions following a string of expensive engine blow-ups!

Engines began with the base 3.3-litre six, 4.1-litre six, 5.0-litre V8, and 5.8-litre (351 Cleveland) V8. Transmissions were the base column change, three-speed manual transmission, or console-mounted four-speed manual. Automatics were three-speed with column- or console-mounted gear selectors.

In total, 197,293 XD Ford Falcons were built, with the model replaced by the XE in March 1982. Ford built 6017 utilities, just 56 of them powered by the Cleveland 351 V8 engine.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Ford Falcon XD utility GL with S Pack option

Engine: Cleveland 351 cubic-inch (5.8-litre) V8, iron cylinder heads

Comp. ratio: 8.9:1

Bore/Stroke: 102mm/89mm

Power: 49kW at 4300rpm

Torque: 415Nm at 3000rpm

Fuel: Two-barrel carburettor, electronic ignition, 17.7-litres/100km

Suspension, F/R: Independent double-wishbone with reaction strut in tension, anti-roll bar, Bilstein gas shock absorbers / Salisbury limited-slip differential

Brakes, F/R: Ventilated disc / Solid disc

Steering: Recirculating-ball, variable-ratio power steering

Transmission: Three-speed T-bar automatic

Options: S Pack trim — slotted wheels, pinstriping, 'S' badges, wool-blend cloth trim, digital clock, driving lights, blacked-out paint treatments and sport instrumentation including tachometer; Class 1 towing pack

Tyres: ER70H14 on steel rims

Performance: 205kph



Lew Eustace with his rare 1980 Ford Falcon XD 351 V8 utility

where the big Cleveland V8 resides.

Some Ford enthusiasts at a local car show went through the numbers and engine plates, telling him that it had definitely been fitted at the factory with the correct GT wheels and other bits. It certainly looks to be the genuine article and not modified. Despite just 150,000km recorded, Lew still pulled the motor down to check it and clean it.

"I put in new gaskets and some fresh oil, cleaned up the thermal carbie on the 351 Cleveland and thought well, it sure runs nice," he says.

No argument there, as the deep rumble from this big V8 adds to the character of this rare utility. Gleaming in the sunshine, the paintwork is impressively eye-catching and a good choice. Underneath, there is ample evidence of detailed work. Both doors open and close with an impressive clunk. Everything is in such great condition for the age of the vehicle and, despite some detail items needing to be sourced, it's as good as when it left the factory.

"When you restore something like that you get a bit of pride in it, and I like people to enjoy what I have created"

only thing I don't do. I've got a fellow who comes out and does that and I've someone to help with the electronics."

Lew is very proud of how the Falcon has turned out and intends to hold onto it for a while and enjoy it.

"If someone wants it or if it goes into a museum or something like that, then I'll let it go because then it will be well kept. It won't be abused — that's the worry, isn't it? When you restore something like that you get a bit of pride in it, and I like people to enjoy what I have created," he says.

In March this year, Ann and Lew received a letter from Ford Australia verifying that they had a genuine production ute. With a build date of April 1980 and with the Falcon XE model production underway in March that year, it was indeed one of the last of the XDs off the production line.

Lew suspects that, with Ford winding down the XD and an excess of Australian-made, Cleveland 351 V8s on hand — they were no longer made in the US — that this particular ute received the big engine to help use them up. The Cleveland V8 motors were in the process of being shipped to the US for fitting to the Italian De Tomaso Pantera, which Ford had taken over as a sports model in its US line-up.

Given the lighter weight of the ute compared with the XD sedan versions, the 351 Cleveland-powered model was something of a Jekyll and Hyde rocket ship or big load puller in its day. This one will lead a much more sedate life now. ■

A STAR IS BORN

Two months after the Falcon was finished, the Eustaces took it to the 2019 Cromwell Classic Car and Hot Rod Show and were thrilled with comments made.

"A lot of people enjoyed it and commented on it. I get a lot of satisfaction out of people enjoying my cars," Lew tells us.

I ask if getting the tired workhorse back into pristine condition has been worth the effort.

"Absolutely! That's my problem — in anything I do, every nut and bolt has to come off. Upholstery is the



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ONE COOL CAT

GM hasn't produced too many cars under the Buick marque of late, but reminiscing about how they used to is a good reason to bring Marin Leusink's Wildcat out of the shadows

By Mat Mortimer

In the '60s, Buick was butting heads with the Mustang and Thunderbird, Corvette, Impala, and many others for eight-cylinder supremacy.

In the Buick stable, the most well-known of the marque was the Buick Riviera, a competitor in the American version of the luxury-auto market and, while it was a two-door, it wasn't squarely pitted against the popular Ford Thunderbird. Following the introduction of the Riviera in the early '60s, Buick released another trophy car, the Wildcat.

A WILDCAT ON THE PROWL

It's fair to say that Taupo-based Wildcat owner Marin Leusink is a fan of the big cat.

Marin's 1964 Buick Wildcat is a two-door, hardtop sedan, powered by 401 cubic inches (6.6 litres) of nailhead V8 engine, backed up by a TH400 three-speed transmission.

The 401 Buick nailhead engine wasn't just used in the Wildcat. The 401 was the second generation of 90-degree V8 power plants producing 325bhp (242kW) and a significant amount of torque for the time — 445Nm. This number was impressive enough for the engines to be used elsewhere in a somewhat different capacity. They were mounted on trolleys and used as starter motors for the SR-71 Blackbird supersonic jet!

SOME EFFORT REQUIRED

After considering the options, Marin imported the car from Arizona in 2017.

"I wanted to make sure it wasn't from a seaside state, to avoid too much rust in the body," he says.

Then he set about giving the cat some claws (again). For some reason, the roof of the car had seen some filler, but inspection showed no real reason for it being there. After taking the car back to bare metal, the bodywork was done, removing the

unwanted and unneeded bog, to get it to the revitalized state it is in now — all stock to the 1964 variant.

The '64 is special in that it doesn't feature the regular horizontal Ventiports like its predecessors but instead wore the vertical chrome Wildcat-branded hash-marks on the lower front quarter panel, setting it apart from others of the same era.





1964 BUICK WILDCAT

Engine: Buick nailhead V8

Capacity: 401 cubic inches (6.6 litres; bored to 407 cubic inches [6.7 litres])

Valve train: TA Performance roller rockers, Super Street camshaft

Fuel system: 770 Ultra Street Avenger

Exhaust: 2.5-inch twin, headers

Comp. ratio: 10.3:1

Transmission: Super turbine 400

Brakes, F/R: Disc

Suspension, F/R: Archers coil spring, heavy-duty sway bar

MAKING IT PURR

No project car can ever be complete on bodywork alone, even a classic such as this.

Marin decided to breathe some new life into the Buick, boring the already capable 401 cubes out to 407 and adding a few extra touches, including TA Performance roller rockers and a Super Street camshaft. Crowning all this valve train work is an upgrade to the standard Rochester carb, with a 770 Ultra Street Avenger looking after the inhalation.

Breathing out also became a little less restrictive with headers and a 2.5-inch exhaust added.

“As much as I’ve tried to keep it original in many ways, these changes all made sense at the time. The original Rochester was replaced — they do have a few issues — and I haven’t looked back really,” he says.

THE FINISHED PRODUCT

The ‘Cat rolls on a set of standard wheels, with the option of a set of chrome Cragars. This gives Marin the ability to get either a hot rod look and style, or keep it closer to how it was from factory in the ’60s.

Either way, all the work put in has taken this car back as close as Marin could make it — engine aside — to a great-looking standard Wildcat. That might well have made it one of a kind. here

“I’m pretty sure it’s the only one in captivity, there are a few Rivieras about, but I haven’t seen another Wildcat,” Marin says. ■







Wide doors aren't a problem when they swing up

SPECIAL STABLEMATES' KIWI CONNECTIONS

By Quinton Taylor

Racing McLarens most often do without a lid but the bare-headed versions are rarer among the supercars bearing that name.

That was the look that appealed to seasoned campaigner Ralph Smith, who has added a McLaren Spider 570S to his Central Otago garage. The retired engineer is justifiably proud of his new acquisition and the technical excellence it both represents and contains.

"It's not brand new but a very well looked after almost-new example," says Ralph.

The distinctive black and yellow car offers a very different driving proposition from another motor racing legend in his stable, the Lycoming Special.

"It's got a lot of buttons and I'm carefully finding out what they are all for," Ralph explains, swinging up one of the massive dihedral carbon-fibre

doors to reveal a battery of buttons on the underside panel

The McLaren comes with a soft personalized dust cover embroidered with the McLaren logo. This helps keep the car in tip-top nick and the reveal adds a sense of occasion when Ralph decides to give it a run.

Firing up the 3.8-litre, twin-turbo, 90-degree V8 of McLaren's own design produces not your usual V8 burble but what seems like a high-revving idle, at least during warm-up. Producing 419kW at 7500rpm and 600Nm at 5000–6500rpm, it will whip the McLaren up to 328kph with a back-thumping 0–100kph time of just 3.2 seconds. Most of this power runs the short distance to the rear wheels through a seven-speed Graziano SSG dual-clutch transmission from just behind the driver's seat. A few years ago, admittedly, another 3.8-litre

The McLaren comes with a soft personalized dust cover embroidered with the McLaren logo. This helps keep the car in tip-top nick

engine, Jaguar's legendary in-line XK6, made just 164kW at 5500rpm and 325Nm at 3000rpm.

The carbon-fibre shell looks impressive but is also strong and light. Designed by Robert Melville, these shells have been built at McLaren's Woking, Surrey premises in England since 2015.



Massive carbon-ceramic disc brakes at each corner



Secure seats are essential for appreciating the handling



Ralph still gets a kick out of driving his Lycoming Special, advanced for its day



Raring to cruise with warmer weather



Powerplant peekaboo

The McLaren weighs in at a svelte 1452kg with all fluids, and stopping power is provided by massive carbon-ceramic disc brakes at each corner. It will come to a stop from 100kph within 32m.

Operate the powered top and a stunning cabin is revealed. The interior is trimmed in a tactile mixture: suede dashboard materials, stitched leather

seats and door panels with contrasting body colour stitching, and satin-chrome instrument bezels. This is one classy interior.

Ralph has one intriguing final act to show on his McLaren, popping a tiny service hatch on the rear deck.

“Other than checking the water and oil levels, servicing is restricted to the experts,” he laughs.

Living in Central Otago, Ralph’s in the right area to enjoy some great driving roads and take advantage of the opportunity to drive the car at Highlands Motorsport Park. He is sure looking forward to warmer weather and ice-free roads to go cruising.

Could this be a future classic in the making? I think Bruce would have said, “No doubt about it!” ■



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SEPARATING LE MANS FROM LE BOYS

Le Mans, the hallowed ground of endurance racing, also showcases nine decades of memorabilia, iconic cars, and relics

Words and photography by Aaron Mai



For the past nine decades, a small city in the northwest of France has been the venue for some of the world's most memorable motor sport battles between iconic marques and legendary drivers. The chance to beat the odds in the roulette of emphatic highs and soul-crushing lows has been luring teams and drivers year after year chasing one of the greatest honours in motor sport. Le Mans is a place and an event synonymous with the motor car; and all who achieve success here claim a place in motor sport history. Few events have the heritage and staying power of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The world's most lucrative endurance race is so much more than just the circuit, the cars, or even the gladiators who come to do battle. It is

the quintessence of France's love affair with racing, and quite possibly the world's premier motor sport event.

HALLOWED GROUND

Recently I had the opportunity to stop off at the hallowed ground, catch a glimpse of the famous circuit, and visit the 24 Hours of Le Mans museum located at the entrance to Circuit de la Sarthe. Opened in 1961 to the public, the collection consists of iconic cars, as well as relics and memorabilia from the past nine decades. Walking through the facility, ghosts of the greats come to life, giving the collection a deeply significant personality. Aromatic accents of old oil linger in the air. Cracking paint and



bodywork pay tribute to the historic battles that have occurred out on track, giving a real sense of the triumph and tragedy that so many have experienced, on the track and in the stands at Le Mans since 1923.

The facility is divided up into six sections showcasing the very best of Le Mans from early contenders such as Chenard-Walcker, Bentley, and Alfa Romeo, to post-war Ferraris and Matras. The Peugeots and Porsches of latter years as well as a few more recent classics sit quietly within the confines of the museum. The entire history, atmosphere, and personality of the race is excellently captured within four walls.

You enter the museum filled with anticipation and excitement, through a kind of a stadium tunnel, looked on by

The entire history, atmosphere, and personality of the race is excellently captured within four walls

the faces that have made Le Mans what it is. Starting out with Les Heros, the

first section pays homage to the people and marques that have come to battle it out for supremacy on the mix of public roads and circuit. The Bentley Boys, Bugatti, Nuvolari, Enzo Ferrari, and countless others greet visitors on large photographic banners as if standing right in front of you. It's a vivid reminder of just how important the crown jewel of a Le Mans victory was, and still is to this day for teams and manufacturers. The information panels are nicely complemented with relics such as Charles Faroux's hat, a Ferrari engine, Jean Rondeau's helmet and gloves, and Tom Kristensen's Audi Sport driving suit, among countless others.



A CRUEL MISTRESS

The hallway of heroes then leads into a beautiful central rotunda, walls adorned with photos and imagery of newspaper clippings and other promotional material from yesteryear. Situated in the middle of the space is a scale model of the Circuit de la Sarthe with a bright illuminated ribbon of light showing the circuit outline. The 13.62km circuit sees cars spending up to 85 per cent of every lap on full-throttle. It has proved through the years to be a cruel mistress. Many alterations have been needed as technology and speed capability improved. In 1988 cars were clocked on the Mulsanne Straight reaching speeds as high as 407kph, when the aerodynamics needed to keep them on the road were still in their infancy. Safety concerns coupled with two fatal accidents ultimately lead to chicanes

being installed down the 5.9km long straight as per the layout today. The Circuit de la Sarthe, much like its German cousin the Nürburgring, makes the ultimate endurance racing demands on drivers with a mix of high speed and technical challenges thrown at the drivers on every lap.

Moving on from the rotunda is a unique side to the race that many fans would barely notice: the utility vehicles from the earliest running of the event. Fire has been an ever-present concern in motor sport, and on display is a beautifully restored 1923 Renault six-cylinder fire truck that served to protect crews throughout the '20s. Alongside the Renault is also a 1920s Delahaye petrol tanker that carried fuel into the circuit, both unsung heroes which played an important role away from the glamour and hopefully the camera flashes.

The 13.62km circuit sees cars spending up to 85 per cent of every lap on full-throttle. It has proved through the years to be a cruel mistress





THE CARS

Next up is what many visitors come to see, the stars themselves all parked up, basking in their Le Mans glory, seemingly frozen in time. Pride of place at the start is a replica of the inaugural 1923 winning Chenard-Walcker three-litre, adorned with a regal blue livery, a single white leather buckle across the hood, and a large number '9' splashed down the front cowling. It was an absolute feat of engineering to

It wasn't long before the British came to steal the top step of the podium in the form of the Bentley Boys, who claimed victory in 1924

get a vehicle to run at race pace for a full 24 hours almost a century ago. It wasn't long before the British came to steal the top step of the podium in the form of the Bentley Boys, who claimed victory in 1924 with their three-litre sport torpedo Vanden Plas, and it would signal the start of a dominant run through the '20s leading to four victories on the run from 1926 to 1930.

It was only a matter of time until Enzo joined the party too. The 166 MM Barquette Touring was one of the first



Just a stone's-throw from the Ferrari was the car that would become Enzo's own nightmare, the Ford GT40

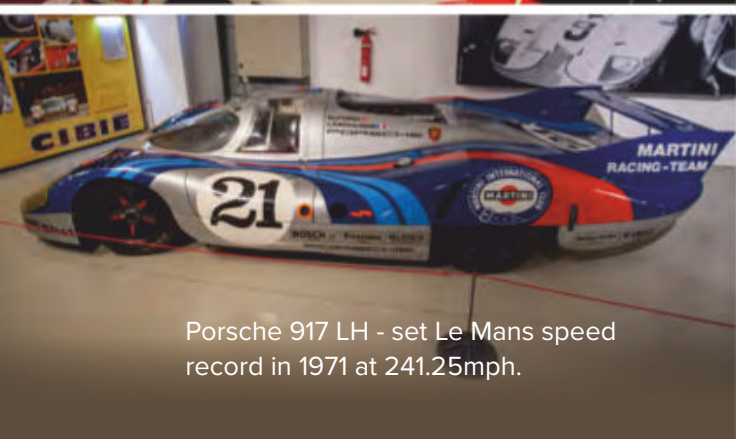
from the Ferrari stable to compete, and the one on display is identical to the 1949 outright winner. Powered by a howling 140-horsepower (104kW) two-litre V12, Luigi Chinetti and Lord Selsdon completed 3178km to stand atop the podium and delivered Enzo his first taste of victory at the French event. Just a stone's-throw from the Ferrari was the car that would become Enzo's own nightmare, the Ford GT40. The Blue Oval was represented by the 1967 4.7-litre car from their second victorious year at Le Mans. Six years of entry resulted in four consecutive victories between 1966 and 1969 for the GT40 following titanic battles with much more than just pride on the line.

LEGENDARY LIVERY

The chronological timeline on the lower floor of the museum quickly graduates to machinery with larger rubber, aerodynamics, and some legendary colour schemes. After the Ferrari and Ford circus it would soon be Porsche's turn to taste the winner's champagne with its 917-LH taking victory in 1970 and 1971. Throughout the same era, France came back to the Le Mans party with its own machinery, predominantly in the form of Group 6 racers. Renault found success with its Alpine A442A finishing first and fourth in 1978, since first entering with the Alpine in 1963. The A442 mounted a



1973 Guy Cisse - built from Renault 8 Major and Renault R12 parts.



Porsche 917 LH - set Le Mans speed record in 1971 at 241.25mph.



The glory era of Group C threw iconic marques such as Jaguar, Toyota, Porsche, Peugeot, and the giant-killing Mazda 787B into the white-hot heat of battle together

two-litre turbo V6 capable of pumping out 490 horsepower (490kW) and a top speed of 349kph. Open cockpits and long bodywork was certainly the go-to for French entries throughout the '70s. Adorned in pastels, and with quirky wings and an abundance of curves, it soon becomes obvious which examples in the line-up are French-built race machines.

Just in front of the gaggle of Renaults, the titans of Group C take you back to a time when Le Mans truly came into its own 'dice-with-death' era, consisting of high downforce, high budgets, and high speed. Following on from a superb decade of on-track action through the '70s, the glory era of Group C threw iconic marques such as Jaguar, Toyota, Porsche, Peugeot, and the giant-killing Mazda 787B into

the white-hot heat of battle together. Responsible for 400kph top speeds down the Mulsanne Straight, Group C was pushing the limits of endurance and speed, and with many merely being thinly disguised Formula 1 cars in many aspects, they were run on the knife-edge of performance versus reliability. Today these monsters all sit quietly alongside one another as if you were wandering up the grid 10 minutes before flag-drop. Despite the eerie silence, you can almost hear the excitement of the race start looming, with engines warming over the excited chatter of crews and team members.

THE MODERN ERA

The final section of the 120-car display includes those we are all quite familiar





Alpine Renault A441 - run in 1975 Le Mans.

with — the spaceships that ushered in yet another era, one notable for the use of diesel, and early hybrid technology. Considered by their older peers as the new kids on the block, examples such as the Cadillac Northstar, Bentley Speed 8, Audi R10 TDi, and diesel-powered Peugeot 908 have certainly earned their place in the line-up, adding to the already-brimming heritage that the Musée des 24 Heures du Mans has at every turn of your head.

On reaching the modern end of the timeline, it starts to dawn on you that the end of the exhibits must be near, and as you reach the exit you need to take a few minutes just

You need to take a few minutes, just to gather your thoughts and digest the sensory overload

to gather your thoughts and try to digest the sensory overload. However, just as you think the experience is over, the final exhibit delivers a knockout blow. The museum's exit

area is filled with cabinets containing scale models of every class-winning machine throughout the venue's history. Le Mans insists on just one last reminder as you walk out the door that nobody could out-do the French when it comes to motor sport events.

Whether you have seen Le Mans live, or merely watched it on the telly, a wander through the museum soaking in the history will have an unparalleled power to grip the motor sport enthusiast's heart and head like no other automotive collection out there. When it comes to Le Mans, it isn't the glory and honour that winners take with them but the heritage they leave behind. ■



RACING LINES

Two drivers with enough talent to reach the very top carve out their careers at opposite ends of the planet — part two of Michael Clark's Zoom catch-up with Craig Baird and Greg Murphy

By Michael Clark



Murf's trophy haul at Manfeild



Craig Baird won the first of his three New Zealand Grand Prix (NZGP) events in 1991 at Pukekohe, driving a Toyota-powered Swift DB-4. The next two came in successive years, both at Manfeild and each time in Reynard's Atlantic car. This meant that Craig had won our biggest race three times in a row by the time he was 22. I ask whether one of them has any greater memory for him than the others.

"The biggest memory I have was getting the trophy home and seeing all the names. Yes, it's special but at the time it didn't really sink in — just wanted to get on and win the next race — but it's much more so now," he says.

Craig concedes that one thing winning the NZGP did was to make him think that there was a chance of getting back to Europe.

LOST FOR WORDS

After Baird, the next winner of the NZGP was Murf, by which time we had adopted the Australian Formula Holden category. Greg is quick to point out that he's probably more famous for what happened the year after he won it. For 1995, the organizers ran the meeting anticlockwise and Greg enthusiastically describes Manfeild in that direction as, "really entertaining. We were a little bit ahead of everyone else but I didn't end up winning the race — in fact I ended up outside the circuit after having a brake failure at the end of the front straight, fired the thing through some advertising hoardings and into some pine trees".

A year later - being extracted from 'the tree'





Greg was invariably the man to beat at Pukekohe

Bairdo interjects with, “You always wanted to be a fighter pilot!”

“That’s correct, and I was heading in the direction of Ohakea at the time.”

Craig then casually adds something of which Greg was clearly unaware: “I was commentating on that race and I didn’t really know what to say because I knew your mum, dad, and family, and I thought, *The guy’s dead; he’s through the fence — he’s gone.*”

UP A TREE

Craig’s comment reflects what all those of us who witnessed it thought, but quarter of a century on Greg recalls what it was like being in a racing car,

up a tree, and outside the racetrack.

“The funniest part was when the first marshal arrived on the scene,” he recalls. “My head was down; I was winded but I could see him out of the top of my visor. He was standing there and obviously talking to someone else, saying, ‘Nah nah, mate, I think he’s dead,’ so I moved my hand to show that I wasn’t — entertainment plus!”

Greg’s star was on the rise at this time. As a boy he may have dreamed about Bathurst and Peter Brock while watching the ‘Great Race’ with his dad and his mates, but moves were in progress to get him into IndyCar via the Indy Lights feeder series.

Craig did get a decent drive in the

highly competitive British Formula 3 (F3) championship via Kiwi guru Dick Bennetts, with sponsorship from Leyton House.

“They went bankrupt; Dick lost his Leyton House money and I lost my contract,” he tells us.

Craig recalls that as a “defining and deflating moment for my career”. He explains that, because he’d spent so much time trying to forge an open-wheeler career in Europe, he missed other opportunities.

“[Paul] Radisich and I were bouncing back and forwards between America and Europe whereas Murf did the right thing, not wasting time by showing his talent locally and in Australia.”



The Audi opportunity swayed Greg towards touring cars

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Greg acknowledges that he didn't ever look at Europe — it was never on his radar — but concedes that his record in Formula Holden here meant that he arrived in Australia at the right time.

“Fortunately, there was a little bit of recognition early on,” he says. “I ended up, inadvertently, in a touring car.”

This was 1995 and it was a two-litre Audi, which gave Greg his first opportunity at being a professional racing driver. He was dovetailing touring cars and open-wheelers but, “my dream was still very much single-seaters in America, and I ended up with quite a large group of supporters trying to help me make that happen”.

While Indy was the immediate goal, a phone call offering the chance to be paired with fellow young gun Craig Lowndes for the Holden Racing Team changed Murf's course.

“I was establishing myself in Australian motor sport — at the top



level. It was a pretty amazing time but after doing a number of tests in Indy Lights, and having a very short IndyCar test in 1997, it got to the point that I was actually full-time at HRT [Holden Racing Team] with Brock. I went into 1998 with a bit more time to focus on that American dream but ...”

Murf acknowledges that by the end

of that year there had been a lot of effort and, while the opportunities were there, he and his fiancée Monique were reconsidering.

“You still needed \$US1M to make it happen and I had an offer on the table for a full-time drive in Australia, getting paid reasonable money in Supercars,” Greg says.

Testing the Indycar



“I said to myself, ‘[You’re] 26. You want to do Indy Lights when, by then, you should be in IndyCar. How much longer do you push on trying to make this dream happen?’ That’s when I called it a day and committed myself to Australia.”

GETTING IN THE GROOVE

I wonder if Craig was still looking at open-wheelers.

“No, not at all. By that stage BMW New Zealand did a great thing putting together that programme with Lyall Williamson. Brett Riley was my teammate. I really enjoyed that because my father didn’t need to fund

anything; like Greg, I was getting paid — probably at a different level, but it also gave me the opportunity to go to South Africa in 1995.”

There, Craig was teamed with German touring car ace Jo Winkelhock and won the ‘Race of Champions’. He stayed for a couple of years and says, “I was sort of set with BMW, doing what I was doing, and went through a phase where I thought everything I jumped into I could just win.”

To prove his point, Craig jumped into a super tourer at Bathurst — “It gave me the opportunity to drive with Paul Morris in ’97 and we kind of won.”

Then came a phone call to do British Touring Cars with Bennetts —

the former F3 supremo having moved to touring cars.

A two-year deal was offered and Craig candidly recalls, “It was a struggle to jump from the BMW to front-wheel-drive Ford Mondeo — with the big V6 it just wasn’t the right car, and then Dick lost that contract so I lost mine.”

Craig is clearly grateful that Bennetts was essentially “repaying me for the F3 thing” — when Leyton House went bust. “At that point, I almost gave it away completely. You get knocked down that many times.”

However, it was Kiwis to the rescue once more when, “Ross and Jimmy Stone chucked me a car with Jason Bright for the Enduros.”



Craig Baird – dominant Porsche Cup driver



With Caltex sponsorship, Craig Baird's cars were always beautifully presented





With Caltex sponsorship, Craig Baird's cars were always beautifully presented

RACING FOR A LIVING

While quick, Baird admits to never quite adapting his driving to the big V8s.

"Murf was very good in a supercar. I was more of a corner-speed driver. Some people suit some cars and I always felt it was driving me more than I was driving it."

Greg won Bathurst four times but the first came at only his second attempt in a V8 in 1996.

"It was bizarre; in '95 the car was retired before I even put my helmet on. Go to Bathurst one year and you don't drive; the next year and you're on top step on the podium. It was a real eye-opener — I didn't think at the time that something like that was possible."

Meanwhile, Craig became a Porsche legend. His win-to-start ratio was not just impressive in Australia but was also acknowledged on the world stage.

"I just felt at home in them. It was

like the harder I drove, the more on limit I was, the more I got away with it."

Craig Baird and Greg Murphy epitomize what can be achieved with a combination of a supportive family, raw talent, a steely determination, and intelligence. Neither came close to Formula 1 but both ended up as professionals. They've both turned all that knowledge in new directions and look forward to motor racing's 'senior tour' when they're old enough! ■





Saker — bird of prey

Most kit car and special stories are tinged with the tragedy of a near miss, but Bruce Turnbull's Saker delivered everything he and his customers wanted — global fame and fortune excepted

By Patrick Harlow

Even at a casual glance, it is clear that the Saker is not just another car. What is not so

clear is the relationship that it has with Bruce McLaren. Not only did its creator, Bruce Turnbull, want to

build a street-legal race car, as Bruce did with his McLaren M6GT, but it also shares the same windscreen as that



car, which was being manufactured in New Zealand at the time.

Despite not making it into mass production, the steeply raked and curved windscreen of the McLaren M6GT has been seen in many race and kit cars built since then. Thanks to the narrow windscreen, the interior of the Saker shares the snugness of the McLaren car. Just behind your head rests the Chev engine, which gives the cockpit its awesome soundtrack. When the accelerator is pressed, conversation is marginal. It is doubtful any words will be heard when the turbocharged



Mike de Malanche in the Porsche 914

“We looked into all kinds of birds and fleet-footed animals just to find a name that had a nice ring to it and a bit of aggression about it”

5.7-litre V8 is playing its full melody.

The Saker is not a McLaren tribute car; it is a unique car designed by Bruce Turnbull. The design of the body, although influenced by GTP sports racers, was dictated by the demands of form following function, with an emphasis on aerodynamics. Scoops at the side and on the roof were dictated by the hunger of the radiators and carburation.

ANOTHER FALCON

The car was called the ‘Saker SV1’. “The falcon and the hawk and the eagle had all been used with success,” Bruce says. “We looked into all kinds of birds and fleet-footed animals just

to find a name that had a nice ring to it and a bit of aggression about it.” Eventually, he settled on ‘saker’, a Middle Eastern species of falcon, ‘SV1’ indicating that this was the first Saker production vehicle. Using his skills as a pattern-maker, Bruce constructed the buck for the car, and with the help of David Short he made a set of fibreglass moulds for the body. David lived just down the road in Feilding. He was in the process of creating a replica of the Lamborghini Countess for future production. The two pooled their skills and reached an agreement that would see Bruce design and build a chassis for the Countess, while David would build the moulds and produce the first Saker body.



Initially, the Saker was intended to be a one-off. However, some PR guys from Kenwood saw the car and wanted to use it to promote their new range of Kenwood radios. Suspecting that this could become something big, Bruce set about building another car while having the foresight to simultaneously build a full set of jigs and fixtures that would allow him to manufacture several more cars. Naturally, Bruce had to prove that the car performed as good as it looked, so he decided to go racing again. Both the Saker and Bruce were up to the task. He set the fastest lap record at Pukekohe and later competed in the Wellington Nissan Mobil 500 street race in 1993. This proved that the car was not just some flimsy plastic homage project. In its early outings, it finished

After producing 10 of the Saker SV1 models, Bruce redesigned the car to take the majority of its parts from a single donor, a Subaru

ahead of Ferraris and Lamborghinis, despite being powered by a much smaller 3.8-litre Ford V6.

MISHMASH

The biggest problem with the SV1 as a genuine prospect for production was that it was made from a mishmash of donor car bits, most of which were difficult to get hold of. After producing 10 of the Saker SV1 models, Bruce put his engineering expertise to work and redesigned the car to take the majority of its parts from a single donor, a Subaru. As quite a common car in New Zealand, this offered enough choice of drivetrain to suit anybody from the weekend tourist driver to the out-and-out racer who wanted to put the competition in the rear-vision mirror. It was a complicated build, so the Saker was only ever sold as a rolling chassis with body and doors fitted. That left the new owner to fit the engine and trim the interior, or they could choose to have Bruce do more work on it, through to supplying a turnkey car.

Production of the new car, now known as the 'Saker SVS' — the second 'S' for Subaru — began in 1999. It was given a facelift in 2008 with a

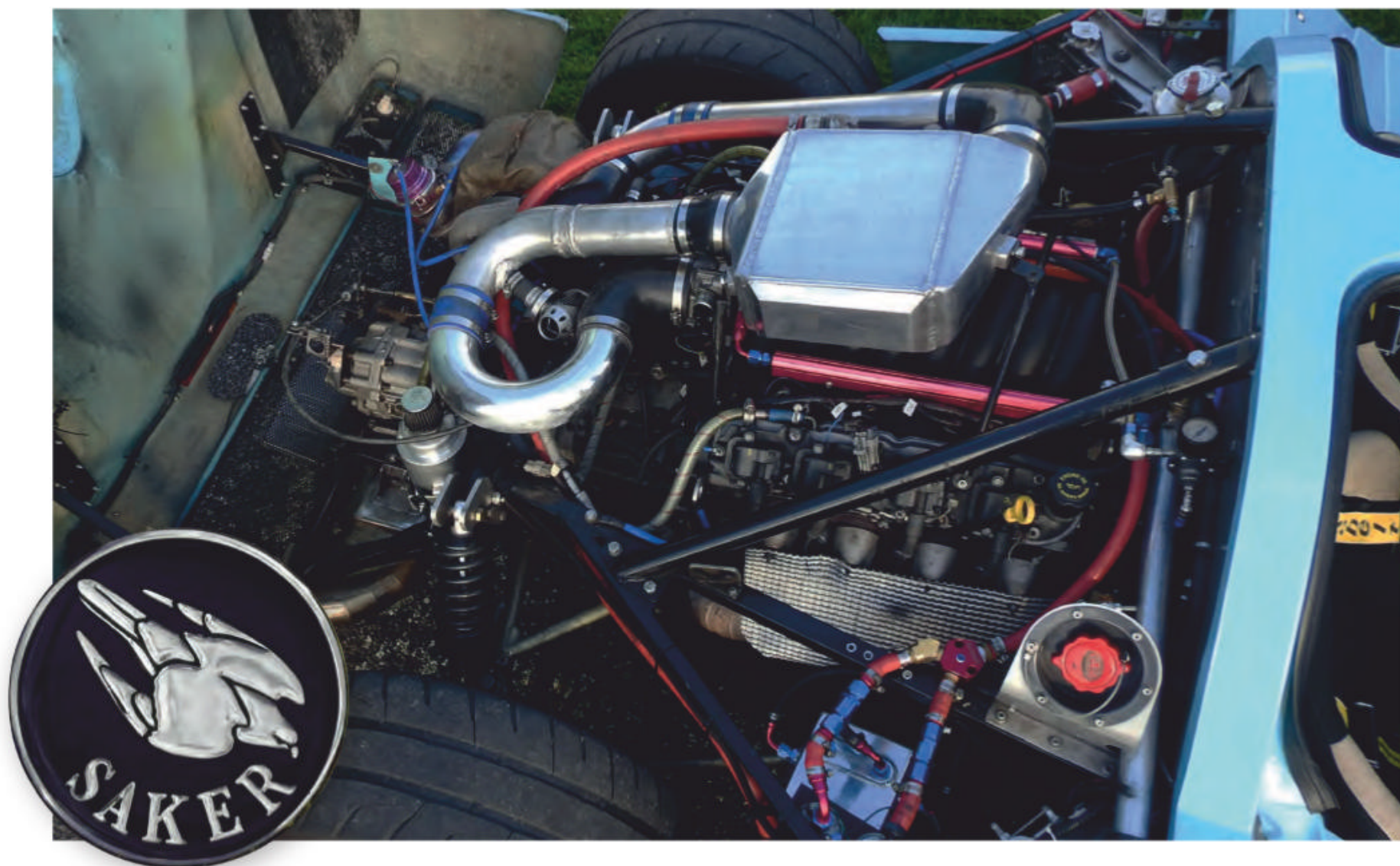
modern headlight layout. The radiator had been moved to the front, air being sucked in by two fans and then ducted out by the low-pressure zone in the bonnet. When production ended in 2017, 28 SVSs and 10 SV1s, many of them turnkey models, had been built in New Zealand. Hundreds more have been built in Australia, England, and especially in the Netherlands, with no credit being given to Bruce, but that is another story.

When I spoke to Bruce in 2019, he told me that he was making his last, last car for the last time. He has made several last cars, but somebody has often convinced him to build another one. This last Saker — definitely the last — is for Bruce to tinker with until he is too old to get into it.

FATE LENDS A HAND

The car featured in this story is the fourth Saker SVS. It was completed by Jonathan Hogg in 2013. Jonathan did a few track days with the car and then sold it to someone in Christchurch. Mike de Malmanche bought the car in 2018. As Mike did not want the engine, he got the rolling chassis and body for a very good price.

Mike used to live just down the



street from Bruce Turnbull and had regularly seen Bruce's Saker drive by his house. Being a follower of Group C race cars, the shape of the Saker had always caught his eye. It might not have happened except that Mike was selling his Porsche 914 race car at the same time that the Saker was offered for sale. Mike had kept the V8 engine out of his Porsche. The Porsche had been a good trial mule to sort out what he could modify to get decent performance out of a Corvette LS1 engine, but now he wanted to put it in a car more deserving of it. The Saker was the ideal choice.

Unfortunately, on its first major outing on a racetrack, the engine melted a piston due to too much turbo boost. Another second-hand LS1 engine was found and quickly fitted so that Mike could race at the MG Classic while he pondered what to do to get more power and better engine life. That led to his acquisition of engine number three, extracted from a Chevrolet Silverado truck.

This was a 6.0-litre LQ4 engine.



It is a derivative of the Corvette LS1 V8, except that it has a cast-iron block, aluminium heads, and low compression, making it a strong and boostable engine. A lot of time, effort, and money was spent on the engine, and it was extensively bench-tested before it was put in the Saker. When it came out of the truck, it produced 268kW. After Mike's tinkering, it was producing 516kW at the wheels, which was deemed adequate for mounting in a body, for trips to the local dairy to

buy milk, and entirely suitable for its occasional race-day outings.

LICENSED TO THRILL

Getting the repowered Saker certified for the road through the Low Volume Vehicle Technical Association (LVVTA) was not without its problems, but, to Mike's surprise, it was not too difficult. Recertification has to be carried out for any vehicle that has had its power increased by more than 20 per cent. Going from a 2.5-litre 169kW WRX engine to the fire-breathing 6.0-litre V8 ticked that box. Fortunately, Bruce had designed the chassis with that kind of power in mind, so all Mike had to do was upgrade the transaxle to the much stronger Subaru six-speed transaxle and gearbox. Another bonus was when the scratch-built bell housing that he had manufactured for the Porsche 914 bolted straight in as well. Then there was just everything else to do, and he was good to go.

An example of his ingenuity is the speedo, which has to be accurate on New Zealand roads. Mike used the information from the Link Extreme engine control unit (ECU) to display on a Windows 10 tablet that doubles as a full instrument panel. It also creates a log of his throttle position, speed, engine temperature, etc., and even takes a record of when he changes gear — great for improving track-day skills. At the end of the day, he unplugs the mini USB cable and takes the tablet inside, effectively rendering the car undrivable.

The biggest thrill Mike gets is taking friends for a ride in the car and watching their faces when he presses the loud pedal. I know I was smiling. ■

Unfortunately, on its first major outing on a racetrack, the engine melted a piston due to too much turbo boost





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Three days in Bavaria

From an 11kW land-bound Dixi to flying the skies in a 1491kW pre-war Junkers aircraft, BMW kept a group of Kiwi motoring writers thoroughly engaged, as Donn Anderson remembers

Words and pictures by Donn Anderson

Tracing the early treasures of any motor vehicle company is totally absorbing for any classic car enthusiast, especially when the brand enjoys as much heritage as BMW. Travelling with a small group of New Zealand motoring writers to Europe 26 years ago, we were guests of the German carmaker to drive the-then new E38 7 Series sedan and the 3 Series compact, but our hosts also wanted us to experience many of the earlier models that built the foundation of the

highly respected marque.

Arriving at Munich airport and the adjacent and extremely modern Hotel Kempinski, we were greeted by a handsome line-up of early Beamers. Yet this was merely the first of many surprises that the Bavarians had in store for us. It was early summer 1994; the sun was shining; and billiard-table-smooth, relatively traffic-free highways awaited us on unrestricted autobahns, where pushing a car to 250kph was perfectly legal.

OFF TO A FLYING START ...

The first car to catch my eye was a superb example of the 315/1 roadster, BMW's first proper sports car with competition potential. Based on the 303 sedan that launched in 1933, the 3.9m long roadster was powered by a 1.5-litre in-line six-cylinder engine with three Solex carburettors, developing 30kW at 4300rpm. It had a top speed of 120kph but more impressive was the aerodynamic

Donn Anderson about to board one of the famous Junkers Ju52 transport aircraft for the Bavarian flight





Outside the futuristic Hotel Kempinski at Munich airport and a handsome array of early BMWs meets the New Zealand journalists

styling, with the elegant sweep of the guards leading to a tapered rear end.

BMW built just 242 examples of the 750kg 315/1 between 1934 and 1937, and the model enjoyed generous success in German motor sport. Little wonder that an optional leather bonnet strap was offered so that the car would comply with Le Mans regulations. The 315/1 was replaced by the hugely successful 328 roadster that not only looked right but was blessed with a two-litre, aluminium cylinder head, six-cylinder that had twice the power of its predecessor.

Several modified works 328s with streamlined bodies had uprated engines, still with a displacement of 1971cc, but with power increased from 60kW to 101kW — a remarkable output for a two-litre engine at the time. The 328 was arguably the most successful German sports car of the late '30s, winning the 1938 Mille Miglia and scooping its class in the 24 Hours of Le Mans the following year. Frank Pratt took a 328 to victory in the 1948 Australian Grand Prix (GP).

Technical plans for the 328 were uplifted from the bombed factory by Bristol Aeroplanes, which was granted design rights as part of war reparations.

The 328 would influence the design of upcoming Bristol cars in England.

With a thin outer skin of aluminium fitted over a tubular frame, the 328 weighed in at only 830kg. Pushrods and rockers were revolutionary then, and this new valve gear boosted performance and helped make the BMW brand synonymous with motor sport. The 328 has long been an expensive classic — not surprising given its desirability or the fact that just 464 examples were built.

In 1999, the pre-war 328 was named one of 25 iconic cars to claim the title of Car of the Century, and today is recognized as the most valuable BMW model, with average sales prices topping the equivalent of \$800K. At Sotheby's Monaco classic car auction in 2010, a 328 with an enviable competition heritage was passed in at US\$5.6M (around NZ\$8.5M), but changed hands the following day for an undisclosed figure that would clearly not have been cheap.



Donn in Bavaria in 1994, enjoying the elegant BMW 315/1, the Munich company's first performance roadster and father of the famous 328 sports car

THE GERMAN AUSTIN 7

In a curious twist on later events, BMW had moved into the automobile business in 1928 with the Dixi two-seater — essentially a British Austin Seven made under licence. Of course, in a subsequent turnaround of fortunes, more than six decades later, BMW acquired Austin Rover in a short relationship that proved far from happy, although it emerged the winner again by retaining the Mini. The baby Dixi's modest four-cylinder, 743cc engine produced just 11kW, giving the car a top speed of 70kph. In 1932, an updated version known as the 'Type 3/20' was the first to bear the trademark of a stylized propeller.

BMW purchased the Dixi plant that made the little car in 1927 and renamed it as the '3/15', offering the model in either open or closed forms, still with a wooden frame and sheet-metal panels. The Austin Seven design was known as the 'Bantam' in the US, 'Rosengart' in France, and a 'Datsun' in Japan. The Germans reckoned the Dixi was "larger inside than outside" and just right for the economical crisis of the day.

Following the ravages of World War II, it took some time before the Germans reinstated their industries, and the first post-war BMW was the 501 sedan, which was followed by the 502 in 1954, BMW's first V8. It provided 161kph performance in a luxury car and was claimed to be the world's first volume-production V8 with a light alloy engine block. Initially produced with a displacement of 2.6 litres, a more powerful 3.2-litre version came a year later, boosting output from 89kW to 104kW. BMW reckoned that it was Germany's fastest production sedan at the time.

BMW COMES TO NEW ZEALAND

Production of this overhead-valve engine ceased in 1963. BMW built around 11,000 502s, and the car became known as the 'Baroque Angel' on account of its voluptuous body styling. Meanwhile, in New Zealand, few Kiwis had even heard of BMW in the early '60s, although the odd private import had made it to our shores. Aucklander Ross Jensen, a

Meanwhile, in New Zealand, few Kiwis had even heard of BMW

former saloon car champion and the highly talented three times New Zealand Gold Star open-wheeler champion, held the Jensen franchise and also specialized in Jaguars and Austin-Healeys.

Ross was aware of BMW's potential, and following a trip to Germany became the first official New Zealand BMW importer in July 1967. The following year, I reviewed my first BMW, a silver 1602 sedan, on local roads. It was one of three similar BMWs that formed the inaugural batch of cars to arrive here, and was thoughtfully reacquired for preservation by BMW New Zealand in 2012. Jensen's very first BMW 1600 to land here 53 years ago actually had a 6V electrical system that was dropped by BMW in August 1967.

The 1954 502 sedan is BMW's first post-war car and is powered by the company's first V8 engine





The smallest BMW is the single-door Isetta that won many hearts in the '50s

GRAND PRIX BUBBLE CAR

Back in Bavaria swotting up on early BMWs, I was reunited with the egg-shaped Isetta bubble car built by the German marque between 1955 and 1962. In 1958, as a 13-year-old busy printing off my monthly magazine *Motorman* in the basement offices of the New Zealand Grand Prix Association, I was one day asked by Frank 'Buzz' Perkins, the colourful secretary of the GP, if I would like to accompany him on some messages.

The offices occupied 75 Wakefield Street in Auckland's central business area — a fine building that is still there

in original external form — and the GP company car was a BMW Isetta. Amazed at the front-opening door (the only one) and the way that the steering wheel and steering column swung with it, Buzz and I zoomed down to Queen Street where the 2280-millimetre-long baby was easy to park.

So was this thrifty, single-cylinder, four-stroke, 250cc Isetta evidence that the Bavarians were changing their thinking? BMW was on the brink of bankruptcy in the mid '50s, with motorcycle production declining and luxury cars like the 503 and 407 too expensive. The company acquired the licensing rights and tooling for the

three-wheeled Isetta from the Italians and made their own modifications, including adding a wheel.

In the first year, 10,000 were sold, and cumulative world sales topped 161,000 at the end of production. Buyers liked the convenience and distinctiveness of the 350kg microcar that boasted a top speed of 85kph, giving nary a thought about safety. The makers airily brushed aside worries

The driver and passenger needed only to exit through the standard canvas sunroof!

about escaping from the car in the event a minor front-end traffic accident. Why, the driver and passenger needed only to exit through the standard canvas sunroof!

Thus reassured, the buying public made the Isetta and the Hans Glas Goggomobil, along with the Fiat 500, the most successful small cars of the '50s. A long-wheelbase Isetta 600 from 1957 to 1959 failed to capture market appeal, and today the shorter Isetta is the most favoured, commanding prices as high as NZ\$60K.



Donn tries the baby BMW Isetta in Germany for the first time in 36 years

... AND A FLYING FINISH

After basking in the sun with an amazing collection of old Beemers, our hosts had another surprise in store. Back at Munich Airport awaited a pair of Junkers Ju52 aircraft built in 1939. Superbly restored to flying condition by a historic trust, the planes flew us to a technical briefing held in the annex of an aviation museum at a small disused airfield near the city. As an equivalent to our DC-3 Dakota, the Ju52 was a German transport aircraft and workhorse for the Luftwaffe. Slow, cumbersome, and vulnerable to attack, many were lost in the battles of Crete and Stalingrad.

Without flack or enemy aircraft to worry us, we travelled in close formation at around 110 knots over Bavarian countryside, with the reassuring drone of three BMW-made 132 A/E nine-cylinder radial engines spinning at a lazy 1600 revs for company. First used in 1932, the 27.7-litre air-cooled engine produced

492kW at 2050rpm so, with close to 1500kW pushing us through the sky, we had a reasonable sense of security. Junkers built 4845 Ju52s up to 1952. As fellow journalist Peter Gill recalled, there was a certain Citroën 2CV style — or even more the bluff-nosed Citroën H van — about the look of the aircraft, as both wing and fuselage were corrugated, adding rigidity to the skeletal air frame.

It had been a remarkable few days,

with never enough time to do justice to the early BMWs while also driving the very latest models. BMW has been consistently strong on its heritage and most of the cars we inspected came from the company's extensive museum that opened in 1973, along with the distinctive BMW four-cylinder-shaped headquarters in Munich. More than 400,000 visitors a year make it one of the most popular private museums in Germany. Always a day well spent. ■



A truly superb Bavarian setting and many holiday makers show a keen interest in early BMWs, including this lovely 328 sports car

Slow, cumbersome,
and vulnerable to
attack, many were
lost in the battles of
Crete and Stalingrad

Formation flying in the three-BMW-engined Junkers Ju52 transport planes through a still Bavarian sky



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Gore

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Invercargill

Auto Radiators (1999)



Denny Hulme's 1967
Monaco-winning BT20
was one of 592 Brabhams

THE RIGHT RACING RECIPES, AND CAKE

Celebrating Formula Fords, Adelaide's Grands Prix, a return to racing, and Tauranac and telephone technologies

By Michael Clark

THE RIGHT FORMULA FOR 50 YEARS

If a Top Fuel dragster sits atop the horsepower list of open-wheel racing cars, then cars designed for the massively successful Formula Ford (FF) category are close to the opposite end. Invented in the mid 1960s as a cheap alternative to Formula 3 for racing schools, the concept was staggeringly simple: introduce the Ford Kent pushrod to a spaceframe chassis, keep engine modifications to a minimum, same tyres for all, ban aerodynamic appendages,

and you get the most phenomenally successful single-seater class of racing car the world has ever seen.

The first-ever race for these 1600cc mini Grand Prix (GP) cars took place in England in July 1967, but it quickly took off. The US and Australia were among the earliest adopters. It took us a little longer because we had the much-loved National Formula, comprising predominantly Brabhams, Ken Smith's Lotus, and Graham McRae's gorgeous self-built cars, all powered by the Lotus-Ford Twin Cam. After a memorable championship in 1968/'69

the class was nearly on its knees a year later. The quality was still there with Smith winning his national title, just, from McRae, but the numbers had fallen. FF was the obvious replacement and was introduced for the 1970/'71 season as 'Formula C'.

Some, like Pete Hughes, converted a National Formula car, while other contenders brought in cars from overseas, such as the Australian Elfin imported by Steve and David Oxton, or from England in the form of Jim Murdoch's Titan or Dauntsey Teagle's Merlyn. In the deep south George Begg built a

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car for his business partner Rob Allen while other young hopefuls converted old Formula Juniors from the early 1960s — cars today worth a medium-sized fortune, especially if they have the words 'Brabham' or 'Lotus' on the nose. In 1970 they were almost worthless antiques.

The first standalone race in New Zealand was at Pukekohe on 4 October 1970, a date that resonated when the combined committees of the FF Association (previously Historic FF) and North Island FF sat down to plan their combined 2020/'21 race calendar. A date was available at Pukekohe on the first Sunday of October and coincidentally also the fourth. The winner that day in 1970 was Oxton — these days the patron of the FF Association, while runner-up Hughes has recently joined the club. It is hoped that they and as many other FF racers from the half-century of FF in New Zealand can be at Pukekohe this 4 October to see that the category is still as pure and the racing still as hard-fought as it always was.

NEVER TOO LATE

I got to know Ian Arburthnott a decade or so ago and it became an unwritten arrangement that, when he could, he'd help me with my belts, and other jobs required between races for an old FF. We knew Ian had raced in the mid to late '60s finishing up with what was by then

Other young hopefuls converted old Formula Juniors from the early 1960s — in 1970 they were almost worthless antiques

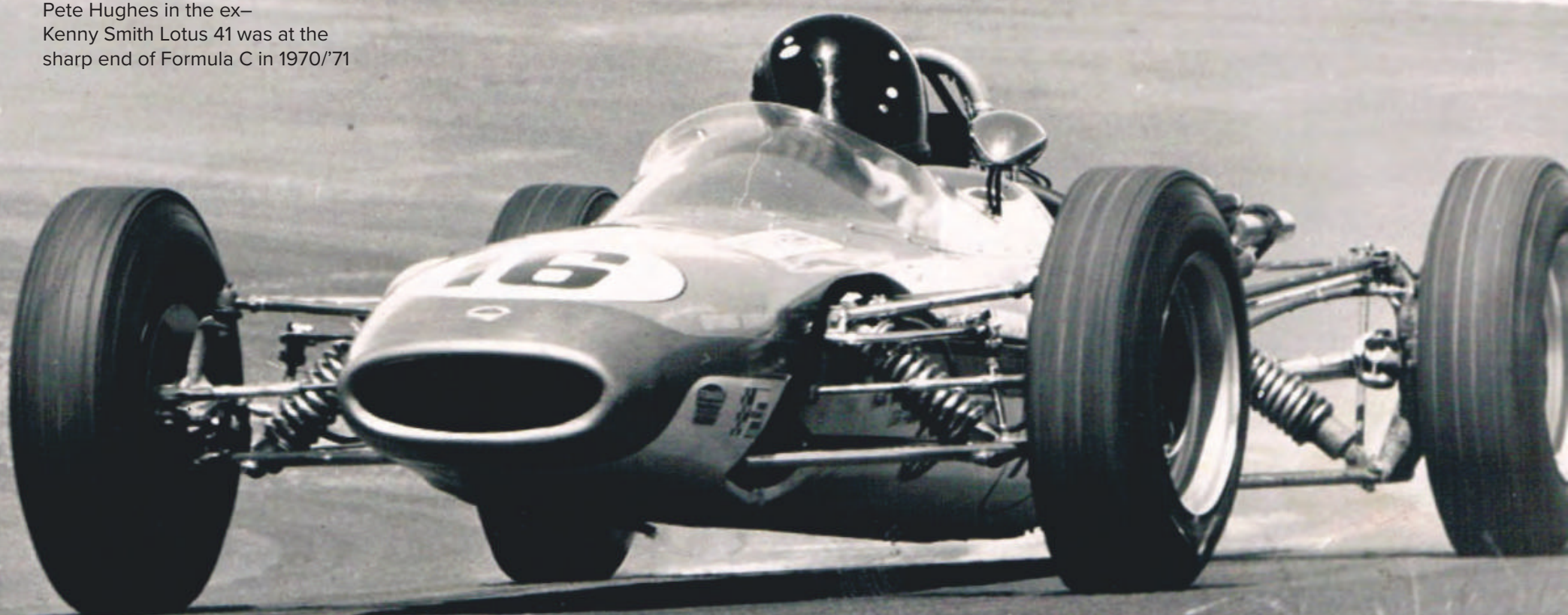
an elderly Lotus 20. After the 1966/'67 season he sold the car and went off and did normal things but he never lost the passion for motor racing. In recent years Ian has wound down his involvement

on the farm and despite being north of 70, decided to have a go at the Targa Tour. He was enjoying himself so much I suggested, tongue in cheek, "what you need is a historic Formula Ford". I told him of a lovely 1973 Lola that had just come on the market in Waiuku. He left the farm in Pahiatua and headed north. The good news is that Ian will be back behind the wheel of an open-wheeler after a cheeky 53-year break. The bad news is I need someone new to do my belts.

THE GRAND PRIZE GOES TO ADELAIDE

October once meant 'nearly time to pack' because from the first time Australia joined the world championship in 1985, I — like many other Kiwi Formula 1 fans — made a pilgrimage to South Australia's capital. Given that the World Championship started in 1950, and that by the end of that decade had an Australian world champion, it is remarkable that it took so long for a round to be granted, especially given the healthy car culture

Pete Hughes in the ex-Kenny Smith Lotus 41 was at the sharp end of Formula C in 1970/'71





Papakura-born Mike Thackwell in his 1984 European Formula 2 Championship-winning RH6 — one of 1051 Ralts

there and that, via the Tasman Series, the world was well aware of the scene down under. When the possibility of Australia joining the big time looked likely, it was inevitable that either Melbourne or Sydney would host it. A distant third would have been the Gold Coast. Adelaide's chances were just ahead of Tasmania and probably not by much. But in a classic case of never underestimate the underdog, South Australia's capital got the nod and, man, did they do it well! I have never seen a city embrace a sporting event with an enthusiasm to match that of Adelaide. The passion was still as great in 1995 as it had been a decade earlier, even when it was known that the event had been lost to Melbourne for the 1996 Australian GP.

Yes, Melbourne is easier for Kiwis to get to and yes, Albert Park is a better circuit than the rather stop-go series of right-hand corners at Adelaide, but that is about where the positives end. I well remember one taxi ride from Adelaide Airport to my hotel. "Who do you fancy for the race mate?" and "How about Ferrari?" I asked the conductor of this Commodore if he was a fan. "Nah mate — but we're encouraged to chat to race fans and make 'em feel welcome."

I thought back to that cabbie in March 1996 for the first race in Melbourne. The elderly driver was

Italian and so I assumed, incorrectly as it emerged, he would be a fan — or at least want to discuss Ferrari. Instead we got a tirade of profanities about what the GP had done to the already overloaded

a million".

I still remember, as late as 1988/'89 'out of state' Australians in the media room referring to Adelaide as "just a big country town" and "How could bloody Adelaide be our face on the international stage?" Pretty damn well, as it turned out! I have returned many times since 1995 — in fact holding a GP in a big country town was a huge part of the appeal and my happy memories.

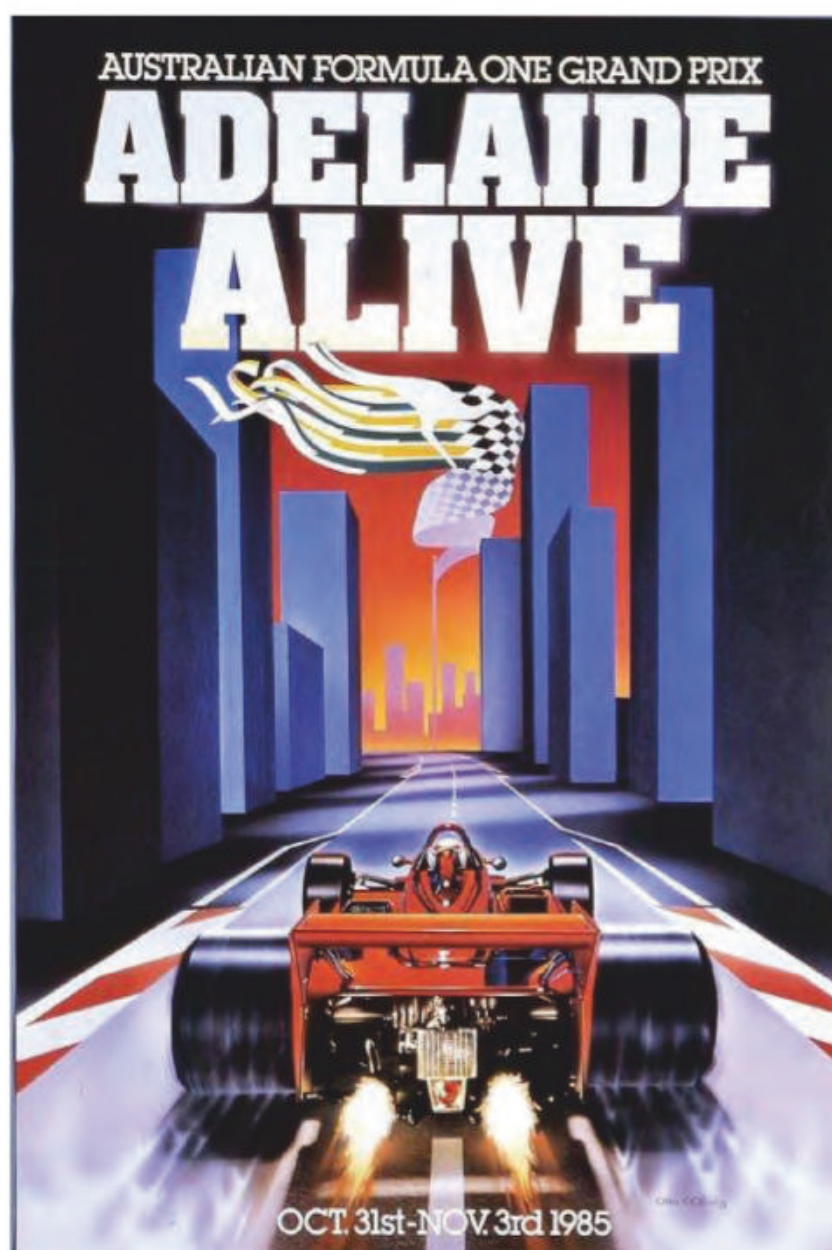
WHERE'S THAT CAMERA?

I learnt a valuable lesson at the final GP meeting at Adelaide. For anyone under about 40 reading this, prepare for a shock. There was a time when mobile phones only made calls. If you wanted to take pictures you had to take along a separate, cumbersome device — and selfies had a completely different connotation. Decent cameras wouldn't fit in your pocket and shot selection was measured against the number of rolls of film you had.

A media pass gave me access to a lot of interesting places offering contact with famous motor racing faces. For me the GP was a once a year treat that I soaked up to

saturation point hoping I'd qualify for accreditation again in 12 months' time.

As it was time to head to the hotel on the Saturday, I packed my camera away in the locker. I had walked up and down pit road so many times, I



Adelaide comes alive!

roads and fuel prices. He was an angry man and before F1 got the blame for other crimes, I changed the subject and asked how many kilometres his Falcon had done — 850,000 as I recall — and the unforgettable line, "I retire it at

was sure there couldn't be anything new worth photographing. No sooner had I reached the bottom of the stairs than I heard my name being called. I turned to see young Greg Murphy. "I was hoping to bump into you," he said. "I've borrowed this pass — let's look at some F1 cars." I could hardly say no, so started on another sweep of pit road. At the Jordan pit, Murf spotted a Kiwi mechanic, Dennis Marwood's son, who gave Greg a

much closer look at a GP car than I could have got. In no time Murphy had been invited to try it out and had slid into the cockpit. My camera, needed right now to capture this momentous occasion, was almost directly above the Jordan pit, safely tucked up in a locker.

Eventually Greg needed to get the pass back so I headed for the facilities behind the pits. I spotted Gerhard Berger and Martin Brundle

deep in conversation, leaning on a green wheelie bin. An hour or so earlier we'd been invited to a slice of Eddie Irvine's birthday cake celebrating his 30th. The uneaten remains sat on a table perhaps 5m from Berger's back. Irvine, frivolous even when it wasn't his birthday, spotted the residual cake, and Berger. I read his mind. Sure enough, Irvine grabbed a handful of cake, snuck up on the Austrian and slammed it, icing first, into the back of his head. The Irishman turned



Our Motor Sport Flashback columnist pilots a 1978 FF

Irvine, frivolous even when it wasn't his birthday, spotted the residual cake, and Berger. I read his mind.

and picked up his pace but Berger was after him, his longer legs at full stretch and gaining. Irvine turned left behind the toilets and then left again to run back the way he had come. Berger took him in a tackle worthy of a loose forward and in one fluid movement began the process of transferring chocolate cake from the back of his head to Irvine's face.

If there was anyone else other than



FFs fight on at Pukekohe



Eddie Irvine in 1995

Martin Brundle and me seeing this I cannot recall but for the second time in the space of about 10 minutes I was cursing not having a camera – especially as the cake migration was taking place on the ramp to the paraplegic toilet installed for Sir Frank Williams, providing a nice authentic background. Having a camera on a modern phone, along with a torch, garage-door opener, and toasted-sandwich maker saves these sorts of regrets.

TAURANAC NUMBERS

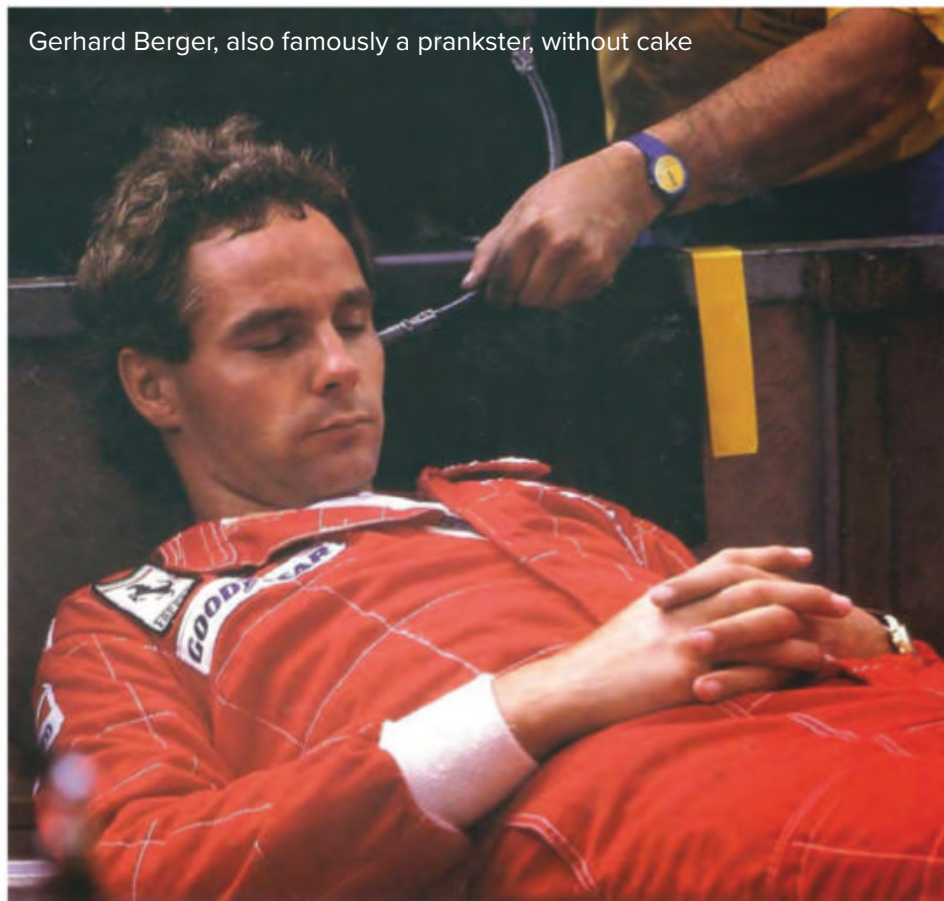
Emails following the Ron Tauranac tribute in last month's issue have asked just how prolific he was. If we forget the run of motorbike-engined Ralts and his Lynx design before leaving for England, and his consultancy work for such as Williams, Trojan, and Theodore, then we have 592 Brabhams and 1051 Ralts. The Brabhams were built in the decade from 1961 — so an average of close to 60 a year — which

is remarkably close to the Ralt output over nearly twice the timeframe, the first ones rolling out of the factory in 1975. The numbers will be right. While many in motor racing are liberal with the truth, Tauranac's honesty was legendary. I've been told by a former employee who later did some out-sourced work he got "a bollocking for not getting my invoice to him quickly enough. Most people I dealt with had to be chased for payment — Ron paid instantly!" ■

Eddie Irvine



Gerhard Berger, also famously a prankster, without cake





If you'd like to let us in behind your garage door, send a few pics and a brief description of your project to editor@classiccar.co.nz



Johnn Jaspers' version of the Callum Mark 2 takes shape

Jaguars in the jungle

It might come as a bit of a surprise to see two Mark 2 Jaguars being restored in Thailand, as that country never acquired any kind of expat legacy, having avoided European colonization

By Quinton Taylor

The explanation for their presence lies with Johnn Jaspers, an expat Kiwi living in Bangkok. Johnn has a taste for Jaguars, Porsches, and Fiats, among other classics. He had

also discovered that metalworking skills have survived in good stead there, giving him a choice of Thai craftsmen with the skill to persuade sheet-metal into compound curves found in these

iconic British thoroughbreds.

It's a long way from the tall timbers of Tokoroa where Johnn left school and started as a motor engineer with New Zealand Forest Products to tropical Bangkok, Thailand, where he has lived for the last 20 years. In the late '80s, following a trip to Europe, he secured a degree in business management at the University of Waikato, beginning a career in the motor industry that would have far-reaching benefits for his latest ambition.

While working in Tokoroa, an opportunity arose to work on a couple of Cosworths after work. He also found himself blueprinting MGB engines, nurturing his interest in more specialized cars until he would freely describe himself as 'a car nut'.

After university, he worked for Lucas, followed by a stint as Nissan's national parts manager before moving to Ford Thailand in 1999 where he sourced service parts for the Asia-Pacific region. Since 2015, he has been Australian company Fueltreat Australia's managing director based in Bangkok. Prior to this, while working with the TTi Global training organization, he



EVERY KIWI DESERVES A RELIABLE GARAGE DOOR.

saw first-hand the abundant local skills making parts for Volvos, prompting his idea for a restomod workshop.

HIS HOBBY IS HIS BUSINESS

As his cars back in New Zealand needed some attention, he decided to set up a hobby restoration business in a 'free-trade zone' in a small town a few hours' drive from Bangkok near Pattaya. Local metal-craft workers were happy to demonstrate their skills in repair, manufacturing panels, and to repaint the two Jaguars for Johnn's growing collection of classics.

"It's quite amazing what they can do! We have got some really good panel beaters here. They are old-school trained and just sit there with their bare feet around the part ... not very OSH!" Johnn says.

The Thai government allowed cars to be imported into the area for

restoration. It granted Johnn's hobby-turned-business a licence to bring cars in. They just have to be exported again within 12 months.

Johnn's cars travelled to Thailand in company with three fellow Brits, two MGBs, and a Triumph Herald convertible with a hardtop, which had been a father-and-son project. The almost-completed Jaguar in the accompanying photos is a metallic silver 1964 Mark 2. It was a one-owner car imported in the late '60s from Scotland into New Zealand where its new owner stripped it prior to having it professionally restored. When its owner moved to a smaller property on Waiheke Island, John took the opportunity to buy the Jaguar.

"The original paperwork, receipts, etc., came with the Mark 2, with notes regarding servicing and repairs jotted down in the Haynes manual that also accompanied the Mark 2," he says.

GREAT SHAPE

It had obviously been well looked after and was in great shape. The second Jaguar started life as a 1968 240 model of the Mark 2 or, as they came to be known, the 'slimline' models. These cars, designated 240 and 340, had much thinner bumper bars and other subtle differences. They were still sold alongside the new XJ6 saloon in 1969. Johnn found this car online. It was an

entirely different proposition to his other Jag, purchased sight unseen.

On arrival at the shop in Thailand, both cars were stripped to bare metal. They discovered serious panel rust and poor patch repairs in the 240, while the Mark 2 showed few signs of rust. "The underside of the Mark 2 had been treated regularly with Fisholene, resulting in a relatively pristine body for its age."

The decision to restore the Mark 2 to its original specification was an easy one. It now looks superb. The state of the 240, however, opened the opportunity to tweak the car in both looks and performance. Originally, the 240 was to get a four-litre AJ-V8 with a five-speed ZF transmission and independent rear suspension (IRS) rear, but, as Johnn explains, it's now on a different path.

AN EVEN GREATER SHAPE

"Given the complexity of the mods required, it was decided to go with a reconditioned 4.2 XK engine, overdrive gearbox, and Ohlins coilover rear suspension. The body is getting a subtle Callum Mk2 Jaguar look with widened front fenders, removal of the fender marker lamps, and the addition of some ventilation vents on the fender sides. It is planned to do all the wood trim in rimu or kauri, subject to the timber being allowed into Thailand," Johnn says.

The 240 has already been the subject of a drastic panel cut and new panels fabricated with the new, sleeker look are starting to take shape.

"They are very clever. None of the panels have been bought in. The Thai panel beaters have made all the panels from scratch," he says.

Looking closely at the now-complete raw-metal body, evidence can be clearly seen of the hammer-beaten unfinished surface. In due course, another Mark 2 will be sourced and the driveline mods incorporated, but there is a lot of research and detailed prefabrication work to be done ahead of the build, he says.

The second Jaguar started life as a 1968, 240 model of the Mark 2 or, as they came to be known, the 'slimline' models



PARTS BUSINESS PLANS

Johnn is keen to work with New Zealand companies that have expertise in building these cars.

“With my background in parts and parts-engineering and sourcing, I know a lot of suppliers around Asia and the Pacific now,” he says. “One of the things that annoys the hell out of me is when I buy a hose, for example, or a rubber windscreen seal for like £50 or £80. The one for my Porsche for example was like \$600. I think it’s ridiculous. Jags are not too bad, but I still like the concept of getting some suppliers on board here and actually manufacturing some parts so people can buy them a little bit more cheaply. And it helps keep those cars on the road. It’s a kind of a passion of mine. I’m a bit of a tight-arse, really, and I just don’t like spending \$50 on a rubber block. That’s a \$2 part! Why do I have to pay \$50? It causes vehicles to go off the road because people just can’t afford to maintain them.”

With his Asian parts contact network, his aim is to offer these Jaguars with modern equipment such as Brembo disc brakes and electric power-steering units.

BODYWORK ONLY IS BEST

Getting back to his restoration business, Johnn would prefer cars to be stripped by their owners and shipped in containers to him.

“One of the things people have said to me is: ‘If I send my car to you, can you do all the bodywork and get it back to square one and repair it?’ I have said 100 per cent I can, but the best thing you can do is strip everything off it. The biggest problem we have is getting good mechanical people here, especially working on older cars. I am doing the engines myself on the MGBs, which



Putting the finishing touches to the 1964 Jaguar Mark 2

have been stripped down waiting for parts from the UK.”

With spiralling costs of restoration in New Zealand and Australia, he has been trying to establish a cost-effective, quality alternative to enable more classic cars to be viably restored.

“If we can get three or four cars together and into a 20-foot container and send it up here, we’ll work on them and paint them any colour they want, then bubble wrap them and get them into the container and send them back. In New Zealand, I was going to get my Fiat 124 painted, and they said it would cost \$15K, and I said the car is only worth \$15K. What’s the point?”

John will negotiate a price for each project. Already one collector in Australia is intending to send him two Stags — probably next year now with the Covid-19 restrictions.

“I will eventually bring the Jaguars back to New Zealand. The registration for the Mark 2 is on hold in New Zealand, so it would make it pretty simple for me to get it back into the country. But I may not be coming back [to New Zealand] for some time yet.

“I’ve got three or four cars back in New Zealand, which I would like to get finished off and get them sold. I bought a couple of cars a while back, including a

911 Porsche, which I shipped up here and put the rego on hold; the Fiat 124, also. I just like old cars! The Callum Jaguar: I fell in love with that look, and I’m trying to replicate it without the \$300K price tag!”

If and when the world pandemic situation settles down, Johnn’s hobby-turned-restomod business would surely benefit local car enthusiasts, given the shortage of skilled tradespeople and lack of apprentices here.

Johnn can be contacted at jljinbkk@gmail.com. ■



Jaguar designer Ian Callum’s personal redesign of the Mark 2 saloon

THE JAGUAR MARK 2 BY CALLUM

In 2014, Jaguar design director Ian Callum gave the world a subtle reimagining of the Mark 2.

Having a penchant for hot rods, including a ’32 Ford coupé and a ’56 Chevrolet, Callum updated the look with less chrome, a better suspension and brakes, engine and running gear, and a new interior. He saw the Mark 2 as a ‘four-door XK150’, and he always loved the shape, as do many others.

Built by Classic Motor Cars in Bridgnorth, UK, no two cars will be the same. Purists may disdain the move away from burr walnut, as per the XFR, while the \$500K price tag will deter many more. This makes Johnn’s plan to build his own in Thailand seem like the best of both worlds.

For the rest of us, the original Jaguar Mark 2 will remain the iconic sports four-door sedan.



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ONE NOT FOR THE ROAD

THE MGC GTS Lightweights: Abingdon's Last Racers

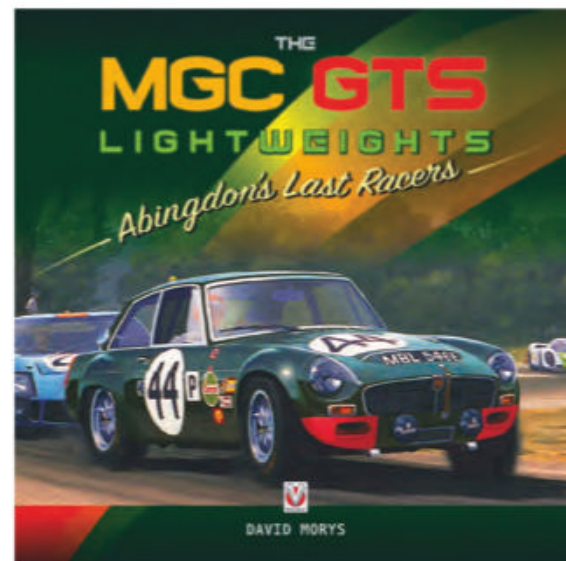
Written by David Morys | Review by Mark Holman | Published 2019 by Veloce, which supplied the review copy. | ISBN: 978-1-787114-45-6

The MGC never enjoyed the success of its smaller-engined elder brother, the B. Between 1967 and '79, fewer than 9000 examples were made. One of the reasons blamed for its lack of success was journalists' criticisms of its handling on car's press launch day when — almost unbelievably — they were handed over with incorrectly inflated tyres! The author notes that the arrival of the Datsun 240Z on the market didn't help either.

Putting that unpromising beginning behind them MG pressed on with a limited race programme in the dying days of the works competitions department. And they certainly didn't pick soft targets. The main races entered included the Sebring 12 Hours, the Targa Florio

and the 94 hours of the Nurburgring. Their results weren't brilliant but with the resources available to the faltering firm at that stage, just to be competing at that level commands some respect.

Enthusiastic author Morys covers the development of the production MGC and then goes into plenty of detail on the construction of the small number of works-modified cars with their dramatic flared guards and faired-in headlights. He notes that the term 'lightweight' is a bit of a misnomer as they were only 2–3% lighter than the standard versions. He also tracks what subsequently happened to the cars and various works-developed parts, the building of replicas and clones, the cars produced by John Chatham and Joe Huffaker and so on. Morys has interviewed many of the



drivers and those behind the scenes.

This enjoyable book has 144 large pages, plenty of photos and it ends with the 6-page build sheet for one of the works cars, plus entry lists and results sheets from a couple of their big races.

STYLE KING

Buick Riviera 1963 to 1973

Written by Norm Mort | Review by Mark Holman | Published 2019 by Veloce, who supplied the review copy. ISBN 978-1-787-113-56-5

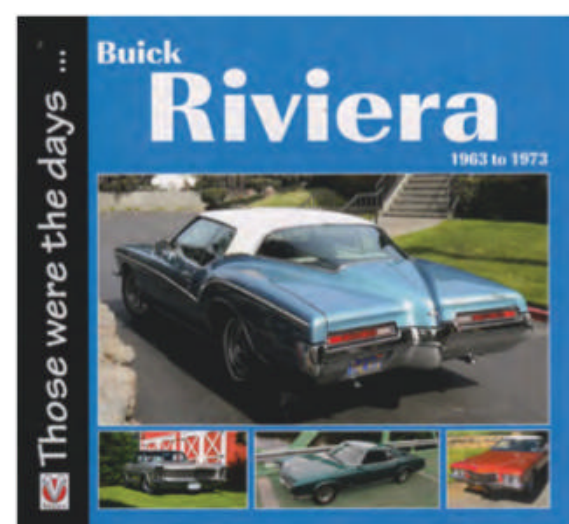
The father and son team of Norm and Andrew Mort covers the ten-year span of the eye-catching Buick Riviera which added a new luxury dimension to the popular two-door coupe market. The book starts with a quick review of the earlier Riviervas, the top of the line versions of mainstream Buick models. That reached a high point of a kind in '58 with Buick Limited wearing more chrome than just about any other car made!

The car that came on the market in 1963 as a stand-alone range called the Buick Riviera was remarkably similar to the 1960 XP-715 clay model concept badged as a La Salle. It was marketed as a 'personal luxury car' to compete with the likes of the 4-seater Ford Thunderbird. It did well without outselling the T-bird. The Riviera was smaller than the other Buick models and had strong lines that have stood the test of time. Road tests were enthusiastic, and the standing quarter-mile time of 16 seconds showed it was

no slouch either.

The first generation Riviera saw mostly minor changes, although the '65 models came with concealed headlights. It's fascinating to remember how limited the standard fittings used to be, even on prestige cars of the day. Even in the early 1970s, air-conditioning was an optional item that added around 10 per cent to the total cost of a Riviera.

In 1966 the car's second iteration had to meet with more internal and external competition from the likes of the AMC Marlin and the Olds Toronado. Car Life magazine called it "far and away the most handsome car of the current crop" and the readers of Car & Driver voted it best full-sized sports sedan. A number of external modifications were made for the 1968 model year but the final version of the Riviera, produced from 1971-73 was a major departure, with its striking boat-tail styling. The new look was not as universally liked but it certainly was distinctive. The design studio



wanted to make a more compact car but were overruled by a requirement to cut costs and share components with the 'full-size' Buicks. Just over 34,000 examples of the '73 model were sold before a more conventional restyle came along for the following year, which is where the book's coverage ends. It finishes with ten pages on various customised Riviervas.

In 96 pages, the Morts have given a very readable account of this distinctive Buick, well-illustrated with photos and period adverts.



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ROSE TINT NOT ENOUGH

I was very interested in Issue No. 357 of *New Zealand Classic Car* magazine on the subject of Vauxhalls, having owned several Vauxhalls over the years, my first being a PAYX Velox. I had it modified with Weber carbs and free-flow exhaust, and fitted with Jolly wide wheels and Yokohama tyres.

My next Vauxhall was a 3.3-litre Victor. Back then (1972) I belonged to the Wakatipu Car Club in Queenstown.

I used it in a few events, especially in the standing quarter. One day, coming home from work, I was travelling slowly up our gravel road when there was a bang and the struts had pulled out of the body, leaving a gaping hole in the boot. When it was repaired I sold it.

Shifting to Timaru in 1974 I decided to buy a Holden Kingswood wagon. A nice car, but petrol became expensive, so I ended up buying a new Vauxhall Viva Score 7. The day it was delivered my neighbour came over to have a look at the car. Well, the bonnet would not open and the spare-wheel well was full of water. The tail lights were letting in water.

The agent took the car away and that was just the beginning of my problems with this car. The seats split, due to rough welding. Paint started peeling, alternator gave up, etc. Anyway, the dealer had the car more than I did.



In the end I decided to buy another Holden Kingswood, a car this time, but the local agents would not trade it; I had to go to another Vauxhall dealer in another town.

Wayne Phillips

Fondly remembered by some, Vauxhalls were very much cars of their era and, while they soldiered on in the UK, it's no surprise the brand fizzled, largely unmourned, here. — Ed.

VAUXHALLED OVER THE COALS

Your September 2020 [No. 357] issue's article on Vauxhalls brought back memories of the mid '60s and Farmers Motors, the local Vauxhall and Bedford dealership in Christchurch. I spent my first nine months straight out of school at the Farmers workshop office, learning the ropes. Both the job and the ropes were notoriously dull, so I spent as much time as I could in the substantial workshop with the tradesmen, machinists, and apprentices. As an aside, I did have quite long hair, wore driving shoes, and [had] an

attitude that may not have fitted with the desired corporate image. Soon enough, I was promoted to the truck workshop office tucked away from the public in a backstreet a kilometre further east, breathing the constant smell of bread baking at the SX factory.

I did what I could to liven my workdays. These were given a lift on the occasion I was thrown the keys of the shop hack, a custard-yellow Vauxhall PAX — some step up



from my 1935 Austin 7. This instance was a delivery and I had managed a bare 2km before attracting the attention of the law, which wanted a chat. Was it speed related or did my fresh-faced innocence [suggest] some guilt? I sat waiting while the patrolman's accomplices conveyed through

numbers, RT, and phone calls that I was not in fact involved in any 'grand theft auto'. I was given a stern lecture on not over-exercising my driving shoes and sent on my way. In those days my weekly pay was around £8.10s. I was thankful not to be hit in the pocket.

My last association with Vauxhall cars started with picking up a brand-new Vauxhall Chevanne from Jack Brabham Motors

in Surrey in 1980. It was, at the time, my work vehicle of choice, a great wee motor that I drove all over England, Scotland, and Wales.

Lindsay McLeod

Governors Bay

A refreshing reminiscence in that it doesn't involve a Vauxhall breaking down. — Ed.

KIND OF INTERESTING, KIND OF

I read the story Vauxhall of Fame by Gerard Richards, and found it to be kind of interesting, but there are some matters that need to be cleared up and corrected. Firstly: the writer states: "I'm unaware of any speedway saloon Vivas, though there may have been the odd one." I have enclosed photos of cars that raced at Auckland's Waikaraka Park: Clive Lonergan — HB Vauxhall Viva, Renall brothers — PB Vauxhall. There is Kevin Belk in an HA Vauxhall Viva and Dave McLymont at Old Bay Park. In Streetstocks Lynne Rogers raced PB and PC Vauxhalls. These are ones that I know of, and the only ones that I can recall ever racing at Waikaraka Park, although I think a Chevette may have been on the track at one stage.

Now, secondly: in Speedway Saloons the writer says that Norm Anderson drove a PB Cresta. This is wrong, and again distorts the history of the sport of speedway. In fact Ken and Norm Anderson drove LIP Vauxhalls and Norm won the Auckland Production Saloon Car Championship before building the FD Victor 9. Back in the early beginnings of production racing (saloon cars) the fields were made up of LIP Vauxhalls, FJ Holdens and Holdens, Ford 100Es, Ford Mk1 Zephyrs, Dodges, Studebakers, and even a Renault Dauphine, so there was a very wide variety of cars.

Kevin J McIvor

Thanks for the additional detail, Kevin. As you noted, our contributor announced upfront his knowledge on speedway was scant. He wasn't purporting to write the history of speedway, so that remains intact. — Ed.



TRIUMPHS AND TRIBULATIONS

The articles in Issue No. 356 on the Triumph Stag were of particular interest to me. At the toss of a coin myself and my then French wife could have been owners of one as we could not decide what to buy. We liked the Triumph 2000 Mk2 and the Stag equally.

The saloon won out as the more practical choice as she was a fashion merchandiser. It took ages to load the boot and the back seat was removed, giving more space. We undertook many high-speed trips from London to Limoges, [the car] never failing.

Some months later we heard about a Stag owner having engine casting problems, plus various others; one having a V8 from a low mileage, written-off Rover fitted. I'm sure many Stag owners will be well aware of all the niggling ins and outs of these otherwise fabulous Triumphs. As said in your article, a couple of things wrong and if they had been corrected, it would have made things totally different — a true motoring icon which will be rightly cherished by their owners for years to come. I was also astonished reading about blind man Neville Falconer's account of restoring his Stag — highly commendable and a great personal achievement.

Lastly, I'm currently looking forward to going for a spin in an immaculately restored Mk1 Spitfire, a friend's fantastic Triumph.

Ken Braddon

Auckland

Thank you, Ken, and an apology — to the president of Stag Car Owners Club New Zealand, Ian Skene. Neville Falconer was quickly on the phone after we published to say we had incorrectly identified him as club president. Neville is the secretary/treasurer. While we had checked our last-minute story on Neville with him, the intro containing the error was added at the last second, and thus missed the usual checks. President Ian has been involved in the club almost since its inception 36 years ago, says Neville. Ian navigated his standard 1973 Stag for driver John Parker in the original Targa New Zealand rally, beating a Dino Ferrari to the category win. — Ed.



Those were the days

And in some cases, they still are

By Greg Price

The Covid-19 pandemic has afforded me time to riffle through my Zephyr Mark One Convertible Register. The Auckland Consul & Zephyr Car Club, of which I was a founding member in 1980, prompted the latest search. The club had purchased a derelict car to restore as a project but it lacked most of its history and its number plate, making the VINing process nigh on impossible. Fortunately, I could fill in the background of this car, and hopefully it won't be too long before it is cruising the streets once again.

Perusing the photos and data made me think about what got me hooked on Zephyrs, convertibles in particular. My preoccupation with cars in general stems, I'm sure, from the fact that my father dabbled in the used car business when I was aged about three or four. My mother reckoned I could rattle off the names of the cars as they drove by. That was when cars were readily identifiable by shape and size, and didn't require large letters along each side proclaiming them to be a 'TOYMOTA CORODA' or similar.

My schoolboy dream was to own my own car. In 1956, while I was at boarding school, the father of another boarder drove in the gates on a visiting Sunday in a sparkling mandarin red Zephyr convertible. I was hooked immediately. Compared with things like the Humber Super Snipe and some early Yank tanks, the Zephyr was sleek with futuristic lines — styled on the American Ford Single Spinner, I would later learn. The advertisements of the day touted that these cars "went like a rocket"!

Not being overly interested in girls at the tender age of eight, the 'sheila-pulling' capability of the car was not a critical factor when I vowed and declared that one day I would definitely own one — although this attribute was noted later. The sight of that Zephyr was indelibly engraved in my mind.

During my last year at that school in 1963, one lucky sod had an aunt who

owned a Mk1 convertible — red, of course — and she let her nephew drive it to school. He persuaded her to have an externally mounted spare wheel, the continental kit, fitted on the rear, and he approached me to paint a picture on the vinyl cover, which I did. It was a 'Hades' scene from the centrefold of one of those Australian *Man* magazines. In return I got to cruise with him after school some days.

Once I started working, I saw a few Mk1 convertibles around Auckland owned by smooth-looking hooners, who inevitably had one or more sheilas draped over them for added effect. Any discussions at parties on the merits of different cars were effectively shut down when one of these sheilas said, "My boyfriend's got a Mk1 convertible." This surely increased my resolve to eventually own one.

Since I wasn't the scion of a wealthy family, my first set of wheels was an Austin Seven — some way off being the vehicle of choice for Queen Street cruising on Friday and Saturday nights.

Between 1964 and 1966-ish, there were basically two groups of Queen Street hanger-outers — the V8 boys and the Zephyr boys. Believe it or not, my observations revealed that a Ford V8 had more social standing as well as a superior burble emanating from the exhaust. So I initially aspired to one of these, starting with a '37 Standard, a '46 Deluxe, and then the prestigious '39 Deluxe!

One Saturday I witnessed an accident involving a Zephyr convertible. Up the street from me lived an old guy — about 45 — who'd just bought a brand-new Mk1 Cortina, which was his pride and joy. Then this cool-looking chap — well, cool but not looking! — happened along in his Mk1 convertible and dropped his cigarette on the floor. While fumbling around trying to find it, he pulled the steering wheel to the left, mounted the footpath, and rammed the Cortina through the front fence and into the owner's lounge. I recall the attending

traffic officer asking, "Wasn't the road wide enough?"

The Cortina was written off but the Zephyr suffered only a bent front strut and some panel damage. I recall two other crashes involving Mk1 convertibles during the '60s. One rolled onto the Panmure roundabout, a photo making the front page of *The Auckland Star*, and another broke in half after colliding with a telegraph pole on the North Shore. Two young fellows were killed. The photo in *The New Zealand Herald* the next morning showed a Kirk Motors tow truck driver starting the motor with the rear of the car nowhere in sight. None of this, I might add, diminished my infatuation with these cars.

One early girlfriend went for a Mk1 convertible owner but as convertibles were about twice the price of a sedan, my first Zephyr, of necessity, was a sedan. Marriage and a trip to Australia drained my car funds to the point that, while moonlighting for a car dealer in 1970, I couldn't even afford the \$150 for a primer-coated convertible!

Finally, in 1975, I managed to buy my first convertible. Tracing its history, and discovering that my mate used to own it and wanted it back, got me into keeping a register of them. Not long after selling the convertible back to my mate I acquired my second one — which is now owned by my nephew.

To make this a proper story — one with a happy ending: having owned five Zephyr convertibles over the years, the one I purchased in 1978, 'Happy Days', is still resident in my garage along with the 'Rebel' bought in 1973. It has been painted at least twice but never fully restored, and has been driven between Paihia and Bluff and most points in between. In recent times the nice people at the NZTA eventually granted me an exemption from their rules about all the stickers on the windows — but that's another story! ■



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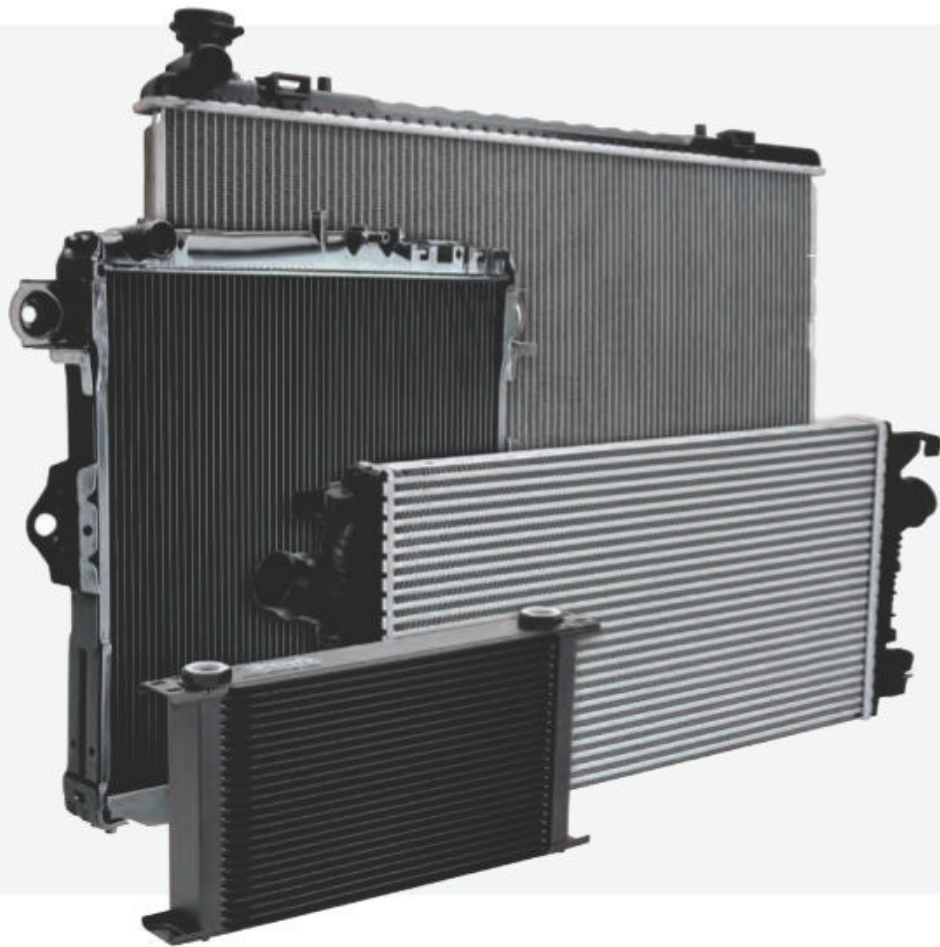


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STILL A BEAUTIFUL BABY

As remarkable today as it was in its heyday, the simplicity of the evergreen Fiat Bambina makes it a cost-effective project car and an ideal coffee-morning companion

By Ben Selby

The Fiat 500, or ‘Bambina’ as it was christened in New Zealand — a name quickly adopted in other markets — is one of the best-loved Italian cars ever. Conceived out of Italy’s post-war economic boom, it brought personal mobility to families from all walks of life, from Sicily to Bologna and beyond.

The recipe was ruthlessly simple. A twin-cylinder 500cc petrol engine, four-speed manual box, and bare essentials interior. The ‘Cinquecento’, as it was known at home, was designed, like the Vespa, simply to give people a cheap-to-run way of getting from point to point. You could even pick up spare parts from the local Italian supermarket.

“For us, it harks back to ’50s and ’60s Italian fashion and style. That aside, functionally it ticked all the boxes for bustling city living and transport, and, while slow, was a real driver’s car with its input and feel,” says Italian car buff and Bambina owner Tim Jones.

The first Bambi, the 500D, was built from 1957 to 1965 and is highly sought after by Fiat aficionados

PIZZA LOCAL HISTORY

The ‘Bambi’ has a fair following here. According to Fiat Chrysler New Zealand, of the four million built, 5000 original Bambinas have lived their lives in New Zealand. Most were locally assembled in Otahuhu, where 800 cars were produced each year.

Fiat 500 owner Tim Palmer of the Canterbury Fiat Lancia Club says, “Most Bambinas on our roads over the years are locally built cars, so it is pretty rare

to see one in a left-hand drive. I’d say around 95 per cent of Kiwi Bambinas were built here. It is also highly likely that whatever example you find, it will have less than 100,000 miles on the clock due to it being a city car,” says Tim.

Market values seem to have reached a peak but of course some 500s are worth more than others. The first Bambi, the 500D, was built from 1957 to 1965 and is highly sought after by Fiat aficionados. “Pre-65 Ds with suicide doors are worth the most. Expect to pay around \$25K for a concours example, around \$18K for a really nice runner, and restoration cars can be had for \$1500 to \$3K,” says Palmer.

The most popular Bambi, the 500F, was built from 1965 to 1975. Being more numerous, these can be had for a bit less, although a project 500F is around the same as a 500D.

"A mint 500F these days would usually go for between \$15K and \$17,500; a decent enough example between \$9K and \$12K; and a project is very similar to a 500D, coming in at \$1K to \$3K, depending on condition and work involved," Palmer says.

These 500F figures are confirmed by Tim Jones. "For a semi-decent runner, you would be looking at around \$9K to \$13K, I would say. For a concours example, it would greatly depend on the model itself. The earlier cars are rarer and often command a premium, as do special models like the Giardiniera estate and Multipla," he says.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

This is in stark contrast to Bambina prices in the '70s and '80s.

"I managed to buy one in 1987 for a fairly hefty \$70," says Bambina owner and Canterbury Fiat Lancia Club member Ken Parlane. "There was just no big demand for them, unlike today," he says.



"You can purchase literally every nut, bolt, and panel for them brand new online, so restorations are relatively easy"

So, before you hand over your hard-earned cash, here are some things to be aware of. Unless you are after a project, a good body is essential.

"Look for the best body you can find on your budget before you look at the mechanicals," Tim Palmer tells us. "Look around the front panel, where the spare tyre is, the panels behind the front and rear wheel, and the front floors. If the car is a restored one, try and ascertain the level of restoration and quality. A fresh coat of paint can hide all sorts of nasties. There were a lot of dodgy fixes done on these 15–20 years back due to their low value then," says Jones.

The Bambina's 500cc two-cylinder engine is very resilient due to its simplicity and low state of tune, and even those with basic skills with a toolkit can maintain one.

"If someone is prepared to learn, they can perform all the routine maintenance themselves. Oil changes should be done at least once a year or every 2000km," explains Tim Palmer.



BUYING EVERY BIT

If you do decide on a project, you can still easily buy all of the body panels and mechanical components online.

“You can purchase literally every nut, bolt, and panel for them brand new online, so restorations are relatively easy. They are a great first project car to dip your toes into restoration due to their simplicity and size,” says Jones.

Unlike some Italian classics, a Fiat 500 can be run on a pittance.

“You tend to spend more on cups of coffee when going out than you do on maintenance and fuel,” laughs Ken Parlane.

Tim Palmer’s wife, Barbara, testified to this. “Our last run in our car from Rangiora to Kaikoura resulted in us spending a mere \$19 in fuel,” she says.

Thanks to an open New Zealand owners and enthusiasts circle, ease of maintenance, and all the sunny optimism that goes with driving one, a Fiat 500 Bambina is one of the all-time great classic car buys.



“We buy them for fun, not so much as an investment. However, it will definitely hold its value due to its following,” says Barbara Palmer. “They are still a very fun, usable, low-cost car, and with fuel prices increasing, and parking becoming harder, they are still perfect at what they were originally designed for — good fun, low-cost city motoring,” says Tim Jones.

Bella macchina! ■



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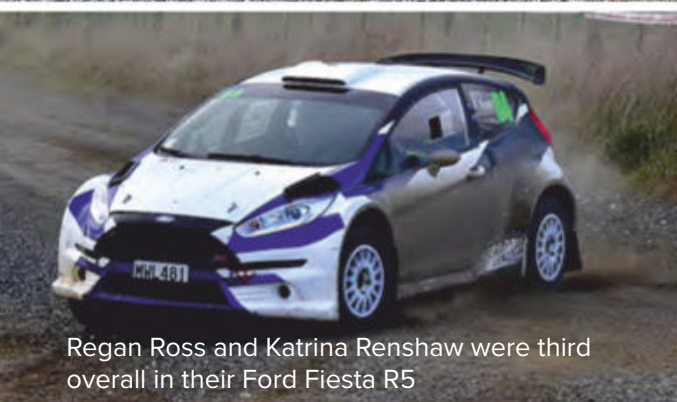
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Gore father-and-son team Andrew and Hayden Graves placed second overall in their Mitsubishi Lancer Evo III

20TH CATLINS COAST RALLY ONE FOR THE AGES

Words by Quinton Taylor, photography by Dave Loudon Photography and from New Zealand Classic Car archives

Providing a welcome return of motor sport, the Eastern Southland Car Club's 20th annual Catlins Coast Rally attracted a strong field of 84 drivers.

International competitor Hayden Paddon was not competing but used the rally to get some road time in his Hyundai i20 AP4 — but not much. He managed just two stages before retiring with mechanical troubles.

Canterbury's Matt Somerfield and co-driver Jared Christofferson emerged as victors overall in their new Mitsubishi Mirage AP4. They no doubt finished happiest, but all competitors relished the chance to be back on rally roads. Held in ideal conditions, the rally provided a great spectacle for both competitors and spectators just a week before some of the North Island contingent would have been ruled out by Auckland's second Covid lockdown.

Some competitors reached notable milestones. Balclutha's Barry Mills recorded his 20th Catlins attendance, this time with his son Daniel co-driving. They started but didn't finish, as their usually reliable Hillman

Avenger had to be retired due to a lack of stopping power on the challenging hilly stages of this rally. Over the years, Barry has recorded 10 top-10 finishes with this classic rally car, including a 10th overall in last year's rally. In 1999, he finished third equal.

Gore driver Andrew Graves has won five times at the Catlins Rally. He also has completed all 20 Catlins events as both a driver and as co-driver for Derek Ayson and Tony Quinn. Like Barry, this year Andrew's Mitsubishi Evo III was co-driven by his son Hayden (17).

"It will be great for Hayden to drive in the event one day, maybe with me as co-driver — when he can afford to pay the bill," he joked.

It's a successful pairing as they powered through to second place in the fast-paced rally, winning both the first and last stages.

"Credit to Matt, he did very well. We are happy with second, and Hayden and everyone who helped me did a great job," Andrew said.

Gore driver Derek Ayson has notched up 18 attendances at the Catlins Rally. For the past two years,

he has helped out in zero-car duties in a Ford Ranger pickup. Normally behind the wheel of possibly one of the quickest Ford Escort Mk2 rally cars in the country, expect to see him back competing and sliding again in a Opel Manta rally car for next season, one of three of these rare and handsome European cars being prepared in New Zealand for rallying.

While driving the zero car is not the same as competing, Ayson says, "It is nice to be behind the wheel. I enjoy the camaraderie and it is still good to drive the roads."

Regular competitor Regan Ross decided late in the piece to drive down from Kaikoura in his brand new Ford Fiesta R5, co-driven by Katrina Renshaw from Palmerston North. The trip proved to be well worth the effort of completing the car the Monday night before the rally, to claim a spot on the podium.

"We exceeded expectations. We had only just driven up and down the road at home before coming here. We did heaps of learning in the car today," Regan said.

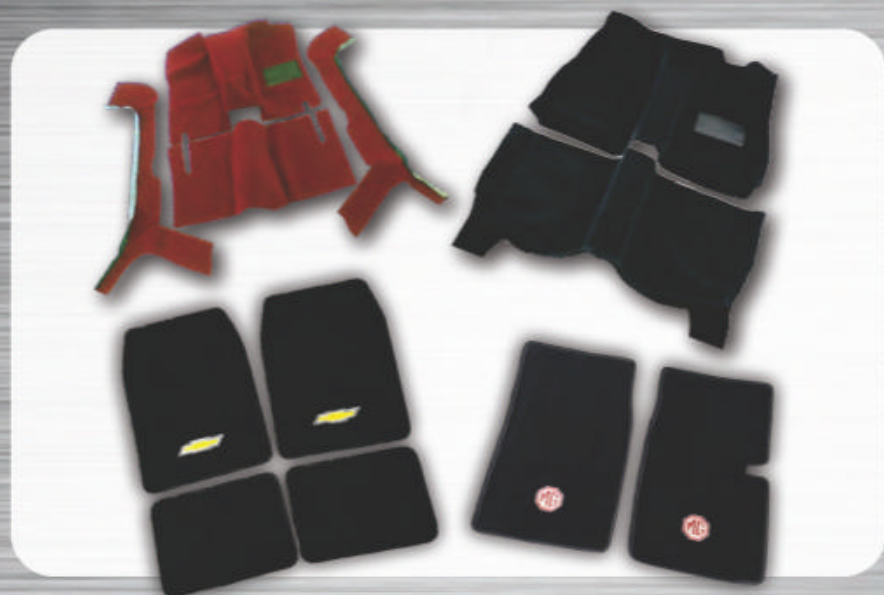
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Christchurch's Jim and Dannielle Tennant in a rare Nissan 240RS sampling the Catlins

Other results

Fourth: Dean Bond and Scot Milne won the Kerry O'Donohue Memorial Trophy for first South Otago crew home in their Mitsubishi Evo VI 1/2. They also took the Valley Coachlines four-wheel-drive Class D trophy.

Fifth: Josh Marston rectified a 15-year gap in Catlins Rally events with co-driver James Bee and added valuable points to their Mainland Rally series total in their Holden Barina.

Sixth: Dean Buist and Karl Celeste were the first two-wheel-drive team home in their AP4 Volkswagen Golf GTi and winners of the Ritchies 1601cc-and-Over Class C Trophy.

Seventh: Matthew Wright and Stephen Lloyd in a Subaru Impreza WRX and the Stadium Finance Class E Pre-1966 Four-Wheel-Drive Trophy

Eighth: Garet Thomas / Robert Burrowes, Subaru Impreza WRX STi

Ninth: Marcus Van Klink / Dave Neill, Mazda RX-8

Tenth: David Clearwater / Allister Gibson, Mitsubishi Evo IV

Glen Shirlaw Memorial Trophy: Husband-and-wife duo of Richie and Rachel Chadwick in a Toyota Levin, the first Otago Sports Car Club drivers home in 14th place, along with the Custom Build Engineering Class B trophy

Magnum Motors Class H trophy: Ben Hunt / Tony Rawstorn

Balclutha Auto Electrics 0-1701cc Class F trophy: Brendon Mitchell / Ross Taylor

Derek Ayson PGG Wrightson Real Estate Class G: Stephen Gill / Chris McFarlane

Balclutha Auto Electrics, Class A: Harry Judd / Sarah Brennan

Advance Agriculture, novice drivers: Tim Mackersy and Peter Bowden, respectively, with the co-drivers awards to Robert Burrows and Chris Pinches



Haydn Mackenzie and Matthew Sayers (Mitsubishi Evo X) won the 25th anniversary Targa New Zealand tarmac motor rally last year. Targa New Zealand events also include a concurrent but non-competitive Targa Tour as well as a Time Trial event run in conjunction with the Vintage Car Club of New Zealand (Photo: Fast Company / ProShotz)

COVID-19 PUTS PAID TO TARGA 2020

By Ross MacKay

The restrictions in the greater Auckland region put in place by the government to stem a second wave of the Covid-19 tide have claimed their first major scalp of the 2020/21 summer motor racing season — what was to be the 26th annual Targa New Zealand tarmac motor rally.

Event owner and director Peter Martin of the Wiri, Auckland-based Ultimate Rally Group, had already trimmed this year's multi-day event from five to four days, and moved the date back by 10 days — to 14-18 October. His Ultimate Rally Group team had also pencilled a route closer to Auckland, to make it easier for prospective competitors to take part in these difficult times.

However, late last week, the event took a fatal blow. The restrictions on travel by Aucklanders in and out of the region under Level 3 cast a shadow over the event. Even if it was lifted ahead of the event, the uncertainty and ongoing effects were certain to affect competitors' plans. That alone persuaded him to put plans for the 2020 meeting on hold. But the Prime Minister's decision to delay the election, now scheduled to take place over the weekend of the rally, was the final straw.

As Peter told event regulars personally, and published in a post on the event's Facebook page (targa.nz), "It is with a heavy heart and realisation we announce that the Targa New Zealand event due for October 2020 will not be able to run on the set dates.

"Given the recent Covid-19 Level 3 restrictions around the Auckland region and the Level 2 restrictions across the wider country, we are simply not able to continue with the resident consultation process scheduled at this time to meet the requirements set out by the local councils from whom we obtain the road closures.

"Added to this is the delay of the election to the 17th October, which now falls within the planned event dates. The effect on the wider communities trying to get out to vote on the day means that a number of the roads we have applied for which encompass facilities, such as schools being used as polling booths, are now no longer available."

The team is now looking at alternative dates. Martin stresses that the fluid state of the government's response to the current state of Covid-19 play means it is simply too early to decide what those dates may be.

"Given the speed with which the Covid-19 virus can return and with the long lead times required by councils for road closure applications to be processed, we are not yet in a position to set an alternative date that we can be confident will eventuate."

To find out more about the various Targa events, go to the Targa New Zealand website at targa.nz.



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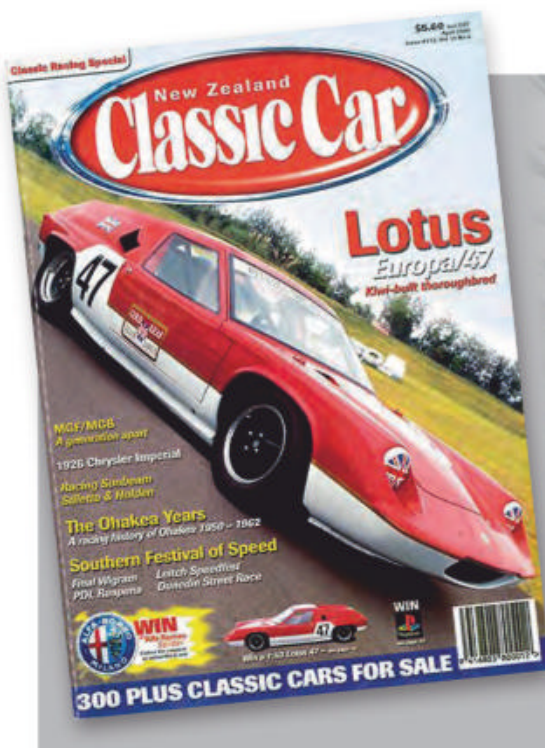
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OBITUARY – BRIAN MAURICE BRADSHAW

DIED 6 AUGUST 2020 AT WAIMATE, AGE 70

By QUINTON TAYLOR

Friends and family gathered in Mosgiel on 28 August to celebrate the life of Brian Bradshaw in a memorial service following his passing at Waimate on 6 August 2020.

In his 70 years, Brian succeeded as a gifted top-line international team engineer and sometime driver. In later years, Hillman and Sunbeam enthusiasts in New Zealand and overseas knew of his Christchurch-based ImpWerks specialist tuning, parts supply, and manufacturing business, as well as his track appearances in a beautifully prepared bright-red Sunbeam Stiletto, currently raced by Ian Perry.

International racing driver Paul Radisich

took part in the 1988 New Zealand summer season in New Zealand and asked Brian to join him.

“Brian wanted to come home for a holiday, and he helped me with my Formula Atlantic/Pacific campaign. He prepared the car and we went on and won the championship that year in a Ralt RT4. We had a really good season. Single-seaters were something he always really enjoyed, and his preparation was always very meticulous. We finished every race and also won the New Zealand Grand Prix and the championship,” Paul said.

Brian was back in New Zealand after fulfilling his ambition to work in the motor racing scene in the US culminating in the

Truesports / Rahal racing team operated by Jim Trueman out of Hilliard.

“As a preparer of racing cars, I don’t think there was anyone better at his job. I will miss his emails too,” Radisich said.

Canterbury motor racing enthusiast Dennis Chapman also has fond memories of Brian, particularly racing BMW saloons together in Australia.

“Brian raced two Bathurst 1000s with me. One year (1997), we got eighth, which was amazing for both of us, and the next year we got 11th, I think. We weren’t what you would call brilliant drivers, but Brian prepared the cars bloody well, so they just kept going.

“In the 1997 race, Brian was driving and we got onto the leader board and it was funny — the announcers asked who this driver was from New Zealand. What’s he doing up at eighth? They followed him for a whole lap.”

On his return from the US and Trans-Am motor racing, Brian set up a racing car preparation workshop in part of Chapman’s garage. He built Trans-Am cars for Greg Lancaster and set up a Fiat Abarth X1/9 replica that Lawrie Steer built for Dennis. Brian went on to build more X1/9s, including one for Debbie, Dennis’s wife.

“He had an uncanny knack for setting up cars. He had an amazing gut feel for what a car was doing. I suppose that comes from years of experience in America,” Dennis said.

Dennis had a final duty to perform for his friend, taking his ashes around the Levels [Raceway, Timaru] in the Fiat Abarth X1/9 Brian made, before spreading his ashes.

1800 REBORN IN 2020

Cyan Racing, which develops racing Volvos, has reimagined, redesigned, and re-engineered the original Volvo P1800 for limited production. Weighing just 990kg, it is now powered by a two-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine with 308kW and 455Nm of torque.

Project manager and head of engineering at Cyan Racing Mattias Evansson says cars from the ’60s are far from ideal platforms for modern performance cars.

“We have redesigned the structure of the original shape and strengthened weak points in the chassis through triangulation, using high-strength steel and integrated the carbon-fibre body with the chassis structure.”

The shape, made famous by Roger Moore’s TV character The Saint, has been redesigned to accommodate wider tracks, bigger wheels, and to reposition the greenhouse. Production will begin shortly with prices starting around \$750K.





MUSCLE GARAGE IS BACK

Repco Muscle Garage is back on TV, featuring every Sunday on Three's *CRC Motorsport*. This seventh season starts on 18 October, meaning the full 10-episode series is still to air as this issue of *New Zealand Classic Car* goes live.

As fans of local content, local cars, and personal expression through the medium of workshops, we'll be tuning in to get a weekly dose of New Zealand's coolest V8-powered cars, events, and shed-based creativity. So why not join us on the couch, settle down in front of *CRC Motorsport* every Sunday, and take in the weekly segment of *Muscle Garage*.

This show is funded through the sponsorship of Repco New Zealand, Meguiar's NZ, and Mount Shop.

Event Diary

Due to Covid-19 precautions, events may be postponed or cancelled. Please confirm details with event organizers.

19 – 20 SEPTEMBER The Ashley Forest Rallysprint

Ashley Forest, Rangiora
CANCELLED

20 SEPTEMBER Cruise for Suicide Prevention

Hosted by Mates Car Cruise, Dunedin
Leaves Ice Stadium car park, 101 Victoria Road, Dunedin, at 11am

20 SEPTEMBER Historic Racing and Sports Car Club Annual Swap Meet

Franklin A&P Grounds, Station Road, Pukekohe

20 SEPTEMBER Talisman Hotel Big Brekkie & Car Display

Main Road, Katikati

26 SEPTEMBER Paeroa Vintage & Classic Car Show and Swap Meet

Wharf Street, Paeroa

26–27 SEPTEMBER Ice Breaker 2020

Hampton Downs, Te Kauwhata

27 SEPTEMBER 18th Annual North Canterbury Classic Tour

Better Half Cafe, State Highway 1, departure from 11am
Leithfield

27 SEPTEMBER Rotorua VCC 40th Central North Island Swap Meet and Car Show

Stock Car Raceway, Paradise Valley Road, Rotorua

27 SEPTEMBER Central North Island Swap Meet

Rotorua
CANCELLED

OCTOBER The Evolution of Japanese Cars

Bill Richardson Transport World Invercargill
Dates TBA

3 OCTOBER Aroha Cruise In 2020

Main Street, Te Aroha

3–4 OCTOBER Horsepower Rally

Timaru International Motor Raceway, Timaru

4 OCTOBER Cars and Coffee Whitianga

Frankies Bar and Grill, Albert Street, Whitianga

4 OCTOBER Hamilton Classic Car Meet, Boot Sale and Breakfast

Classic Museum and Jukebox Diner, Hamilton

9–11 OCTOBER VCC Canterbury McLeans Island Swap Meet

McLeans Island Road, Christchurch

11 OCTOBER Coffee and Cars

Southward Car Museum, Paraparaumu

17 OCTOBER Southern Spin Charity Cruise

Forbury Park Raceway, Dunedin

17–18 OCTOBER Hamilton Vintage and Classic Car 25th Birthday

Classics Museum car park, Railside Place, Frankton

23–26 OCTOBER NZ Mini Owners Weekend of the Year

Taupo and Te Anau

24 OCTOBER Takapuna Rocks 2020

The Strand, Takapuna

24–26 OCTOBER VCC South Canterbury Mt Cook Rally

Starts SCVCC Club Rooms, Redruth Street, Timaru

1 NOVEMBER TACCOC Spring Classic 2020

Pukekohe Raceway, Pukekohe

7–8 NOVEMBER 2020 Hawkswood Sprint

Country Gentleman's Historic Racing & Sportscar Club
State Highway 1, Hawkswood

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28 November — Taupo

7 March 2021 — Pukekohe, full back straight

11 April 2021 — Hampton Downs

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Renault Sport Megane 275 Trophy

By Kimball Gaitely

I've always had a really good run out of Renaults. I've never had any engine problems whatsoever. I've had radiator issues, but that's typical with older cars and, like batteries, they can be considered life-limited parts. The Renault 11 I had years ago had a turbo adjuster, and I turned it up, but it never gave any problems. There were only three of those in the country. I've recently checked up on all my old Renaults, and they are all still registered, including the turbos.

The Megane R.S. is well known for being among the hottest of the hot hatches. When SEAT took the fastest lap around the Nürburgring from the Megane R.S. 275 Trophy, Renault created an R model just by lightening the car — it had the same engine — and took the record back within weeks. It's got a lot of power for a front-wheel drive car [271hp, 202kW, 275PS], but it's not fragile. There are even hotter

versions for racing. The current model, the 280, is around \$56,000 and the R is around \$90,000, but you can spend up to \$140,000. That's quite a leap.

It's great on the open road. I've taken it down to Napier [from Auckland] and Queenstown, and it was superb. This is a very comfortable car. The seats are great.

I've got several cars, and they are all sports cars of different types. Several are Renaults. In a Renault, you can get performance without sacrificing comfort.

I bought this 275 Trophy second-hand in December last year. It's one of a numbered special edition. I'd arranged to meet the woman selling it at a Northern motorway offramp. She was a bit nervous about letting it out of her hands, but wanted me to test drive it. I said I didn't need to as I could tell it was a good car. I just got the money together and bought it the next day. ■

NEXT MONTH

#359

ON SALE
12 OCTOBER



ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA SPRINT SPECIALE

It makes no difference which view you have of the Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint Speciale, every curve from every angle is a treat to the eye.

From the signature Alfa Romeo nose, flowing over the front panels, sweeping back to the curvaceous rear flanks, and ending in that tapering tail and huge glass area, you can't fail to be impressed by the elegance and efficiency of Pininfarina's design. Even the door-window glass tapers for maximum efficiency!

Next month, we feature one of only two of these amazing little Italians in the country, this one residing in Queenstown, which fittingly offers up our best in splendid scenic backgrounds.

As Jeremy Clarkson said during his *Grand Tour* TV series while testing the Alfa Romeo Giulia, "You can't be a true petrolhead until you have owned an Alfa Romeo."

This example has been subject to some intense workmanship from South Island panel guru Barney Tansley, and this rare and special car deserves nothing but the best. Just over 1300 were built from 1959–1966.

The spec. numbers are impressive, too. Alfa Romeo's legendary, rorty little twin-cam, in this 1300cc version achieves a little over 100bhp. That gave the car a top speed a shade over 200kph, helped by a slippery Cd [drag coefficient] of 0.29.

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